IN THE PATH OF SPIRITUALITY



SWAMI GURUPARANANDA

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FOREWORD

This is a book is written with the intention of being useful to those who have stepped into the path of Spirituality (Vedanta).

We cannot achieve anything in life without effort. Such effort should also be proper. The proper effort for a person undertaking journey, to reach a certain destination, would be to travel in the right direction, along the right path. To travel in the right path, it is necessary to have knowledge about that path.

We should seek and obtain knowledge about the path of Spirituality (Vedanta) from a 'Guru' ('Vedanta' Teacher) who knows that path well. Such knowledge which was obtained by listening from the 'Guru' is presented in the form of this book.

To correctly understand the word Spirituality (Vedanta), its true meaning and a short explanation about spiritual practice, are given under the first topic -'Spirituality'.

As the crux of Spirituality (Vedanta) is to refine us, 'Ahimsa' (Non-violence), a value that spiritual seekers have to pursue as paramount, is explained in the second section.

Like 'Ahimsa', 'Satyam' (Truthful speech) is another important virtue to be practiced. Therefore, in the third section, 'Satyam' (Truthful speech) is explained. Ignorance of the true nature of 'Truthful speech' is the reason for the prevalent, erroneous belief that 'one cannot survive if the path of 'Satyam' is followed'. When we understand the true nature of 'Truthful speech', it would be clear to us that 'Satyam' is a virtue that we could practice.

Spiritual journey does not get completed just upon refining and purifying the mind. With the refined and purified mind, when one realises the true meaning of the word 'Atma' or 'I', then alone does one's spiritual journey gets completed. Hence in the fourth section, a 'Upanishad Mantra' (hymn from 'Upanishad') is taken under the heading - 'Who is eligible for Liberation (Moksham), and 'Atma Vicharam' (enquiry of what 'Atma' / 'I' is) is done.

'Sadhana' (Spiritual practice) which is undertaken to purify our mind is called 'Yoga Abhyasam' (practice of 'Yoga'). The enquiry undertaken to understand the true meaning of the term 'I' (or 'Atma') is called 'Jnana Abhyasam' (practice of Self-knowledge). Spiritual journey is that which is undertaken in tandem in the two-fold

paths of 'Yoga Abhyasam' (practice of Yoga) and 'Jnana Abhyasam' (practice of Self-knowledge).

Step into the path of Spirituality!

Swami Guruparananda

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SPIRITUALITY (VEDANTA)

PREFACE

Spirituality (Vedanta) is a word that is known to all of us. But, it is doubtful if we have understood that word correctly. There are few such words that everyone is familiar with, yet their true meaning would remain to be a riddle to many. Examples for such words are 'Bhakti' (Devotion), 'Dhyanam' (Meditation), 'Tapas' (Penance), 'Atma' (I), etc. If we take the word 'Bhakti' (Devotion); 'What is 'Bhakti'?, Is it an action or an attitude? Thus, till we investigate as to what 'Bhakti' truly is, we would be under the impression that we have understood that word. Only when we start thinking and analysing, would we realise that there are subtler aspects hidden in that word and that it is not a simple matter to understand its true meaning. Thus, though we know the word 'Bhakti', we have not understood its true meaning. That is, we have 'Sabda Jnanam' – knowledge of its literal meaning; but not 'Artha Jnanam' or knowledge of its true meaning. The case of the word Spirituality (Vedanta) is quite similar.

Now, we are attempting to understand the subtle meaning of this word Spirituality. We are going to enquire into such concepts as,

What is Spirituality?
What action, done in which manner,
would become Spiritual practice?
What is not Spiritual practice?
When is Spiritual practice completed?
What is the benefit of Spiritual Practice?

A sage had beautifully summarised the facets of spiritual practice, as the answers to the following three questions.

Till when does one's spiritual practice
not commence?
When is one's spiritual practice
under way?
When does one's spiritual practice
get completed?

Taking these three sentences as the themes, we would attempt to understand the subtler aspects ingrained in the word Spirituality.

'SUTRA VAKYAM' (THEME STATEMENT)

We will first see the brief answers to these profound questions and then follow them with explanations.

First statement:

'Till such time when you continue to blame other people (or the circumstances) as being responsible for all the sorrows that are experienced by you, your Spiritual practice has not commenced'.

Second statement:

'When you blame yourself for the sorrows that are experienced by you, then your spiritual practice is under way'.

Third statement:

'When you do not blame either yourself or the others or the circumstances, for the sorrows that are experienced by you, know then that your spiritual practice is completed'.

Taking these three sentences as the themes, at first we will investigate them briefly, and would study them in greater detail later. The sentence that states the concept very briefly is called 'Sutra Vakyam'. The brief explanation of the concept statement is called 'Vritti Vakyam', and the detailed explanation is called 'Vyakhyanam'. 'Sastram' takes this, three staged approach to explain truth.

For example, the statement in 'Taittiriya Upanishad' - "Brahmavit apnoti param" – (which means that "the knower of Brahman attains the Ultimate")- is a 'Sutra Vakyam' (theme statement). Upon hearing this statement, one gets several doubts, such as, 'What is Brahman'?, 'How could one know it'?, 'What is the benefit of knowing it?', etc. Then the 'Upanishad' briefly explains at first thus, "Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma". That is, 'Brahman is That, which is 'Satyam' (Existence); which is of the nature of 'Knowledge' (Jnanam), and which is Infinite ('Anantam'/Unlimited)'. Later, in the third stage, 'Upanishad' goes on to elaborately explain the nature of 'Brahman'. It also explains aspects such as knowing about 'Brahman', and the benefits (Phalam), in steps. In this manner, 'Sastram' explains the subject matter through the steps of 'Sutram', 'Vritti', and 'Vyakhyanam'. In a

similar manner, we are going to study the three statements that we have made earlier.

Let us now see the brief explanation of the three statements.

'VRITTI VAKYAM' (BRIEF EXPLANATION)

First stage:

We will take the three statements as corresponding to three stages. People, in general, experience different types of difficulties and problems. If people who are in the first stage are asked about the reason for their sorrow, they would point out to people other than themselves, or situations or objects, as being responsible. In this context, we should understand that fault finding means pointing out to reasons. Since one considers these other entities as being responsible for one's sorrow and problems, in order to become free from his sorrow, he would only attempt to change or modify or correct them. There would not be any attempt to change or transform himself, nor would there be any personal progress. But, Spirituality is to create transformation in oneself. Thus, whatever the people in this first stage do would not come under 'Spiritual practice', for they are excluding themselves and are engaged in changing everything else.

Second stage:

Those who are in this second stage have the awareness or knowledge that their mind alone is responsible for all the difficulties and sorrow experienced by them. 'Finding fault with oneself', means understanding that 'one’s own mind is the cause for one’s sorrow'. They have realized that in different types of situations, depending on the manner in which their minds consider those situations, they are experiencing sorrow.

In a situation, upon hearing a word of insult from another person, the person who is in the first stage of development, would state that the insulting word has caused him sorrow. But a person who is in the second stage, would know that it is his own mind which has converted the word which was heard to be a cause for sorrow. He would further realise and state, "No word has the intrinsic power or capacity to cause sorrow to any one. My own mind has converted the word as a cause for sorrow. Therefore, my own mind is responsible for my sorrow".

All the actions undertaken by a person with such awareness would result in the refinement of his mind. He would engage in 'Sadhanas' (practices) which result in his own transformation. All the

'Sadhanas' undertaken by such a person become Spiritual practices.

The word Spirituality should be taken to mean 'Atma sambandhi' (relating to oneself), 'refining oneself' or 'self-transformation'. Practices undertaken to refine oneself are Spiritual practices. Only such person, who is in the second stage of development, could undertake this practice. This is so, as he has realised that his sorrow is the result of lack of refinement of his own mind and not because of other reasons.

Third stage:

For such of those, who are in this third stage, sorrow is limited just to their body only. Though his mind is aware of the difficulty faced by the body, he has reached a mental state of being a 'Sakshi' (witness) of the sorrow experienced by his body and mind. Having performed and completed his spiritual practices well, he has transformed his mind so as not to give him sorrow. Having his mind like a decorative garland, he revels as a 'Jivan Mukta' ('Liberated person, even while being alive'). Later on, in the detailed explanation, we will see the type of knowledge and the type of mind he has acquired.

'VYAKHYANAM' (DETAILED EXPLANATION)

First stage:

The 'Sutra Vakyam' (Theme statement) states, "Till such time when you continue to blame other people or situations, your Spiritual practice has not commenced".

We notice that majority of the people are in this stage. For all the difficulties faced by them, they would hold something or some one (people, objects, or situations) as being responsible. If we were to point out that their own ignorance and mental weakness are responsible for their sorrow, they would not have the maturity to accept that. Just as they point out that external factors are the reasons for their sorrow, so would they hold that external factors are responsible for their happiness. In order to be happy, they think that they should acquire external objects and that external situations should be as per their desire. They would thus conclude that external agencies (people, objects, or situations) other than themselves alone are responsible, for the happiness and sorrow that are experienced by them. We will now analyse the types of efforts in which they would engage themselves.

It is a general rule that the direction and the nature of our efforts would depend on the basis of the diagnosis. For example, we go to the doctor when we get a head ache. If the doctor were to diagnose the cause for our head ache to be our defective eye sight, we would take appropriate treatment for the eye. If instead, a defect in our teeth is responsible for our head ache, we would engage in corresponding remedy. But, some others might conclude that the cause for their physical ailments is their bad time (or planetary positions). On that basis, they would engage in propitiatory acts (Pariharam). Thus, our efforts would depend on the basis of whatever we conclude to be the reason. People who are in the first stage have decided that the causes for their own happiness or sorrow are the external factors. Therefore, all their efforts would be oriented in changing external factors (people, objects and situations), but never in changing themselves. Without transforming oneself, whatever might be the 'Sadhanaa' that is done, it cannot be called Spiritual practice. With such knowledge, even if they do great 'Tapas' (penance) , 'Puja' (worship), 'Yagam' (ritual) , 'Vedanta Vicharam' (spiritual enquiry), and other 'Sadhanas', they cannot be said to be performing 'Spiritual practices'. Do we consider the penances which were performed by 'Ravana', 'Hiranya Kasipu' and the like to be Sprituality?

The actions performed by the people of this first stage can be categorised under two types. That is, they would engage themselves in the following two types of 'Karma' (actions).

1. 'Kamya Karma' (Desire oriented actions)
2. 'Prayaschitta Karma' (Propitiatory or remedial actions)

1.'Kamya Karma' (Desire oriented actions)

Actions performed with the intention of acquiring objects that give happiness or pleasure, are called 'Kamya Karma'. Definition for this type of action is that it is 'Sukha hetu sadhanam' (means to result in happiness). 'Kamya Karma' is the instrument to acquire the objects that give pleasure. 'Veda' indicates many different specific 'Kamya Karmas' (actions) to be performed by people who have specific desires. For example, to a person who desires rain, 'Veda' suggests the performance of ‘Kareeri Ishti Yaga’. 'Veda' indicates the desires that a person might have, and it also gives the 'Karmas' (actions) that he should perform to fulfill those desires. This is one type of 'Kamya Karma'. There is yet another type of 'Kamya Karma' also. These actions are not, by themselves, 'Kamya Karma'. But depending on the intention

('Sankalpa') with which we perform them, those actions become 'Kamya Karma'. For example, 'Parayanam' (repetitive chanting) of 'Bhagawad Gita', 'Vishnu Sahasra Nama', etc., performing daily 'Puja' (worship), undertaking 'Vrata' (austerities), and all other 'Tapas' (penance) that we might be doing would be converted by us to become 'Kamya Karma'. If, before performing those actions, we make 'Sankalpam' (express intention) in our mind that we are performing those actions to acquire a specific object or for achieving a specific result, then those actions would get transformed to be 'Kamya Karma'.

As long as one is engaged in doing 'Kamya Karma', one has not commenced his Spiritual Practice. Thus, whatever be the practice that the people of the first stage perform, it would not become Spiritual practice.

Now let us see the second type of actions that these (first stage) people perform.

2. 'Prayaschitta Karma' (Propitiatory or remedial actions)

The action undertaken to remedy sorrow is termed 'Prayaschitta Karma'. In common parlance

it is called 'Parihara' (Propitiatory or remedial act). They are 'Dukha Hetu Nivritti Sadhanam' – 'acts performed to remove the cause for sorrow'.

For the people in the first stage, it is indeed the external factor that is responsible for one's sorrow. Therefore, they would be engaged in performing different types of 'Parihara' (remedial actions to the external environment). Seeking 'Parihara' (remedy), per se, is not said to be wrong. When one is afflicted by a disease, the efforts undertaken to cure that disease is also 'Parihara'. In certain very difficult situations, one could seek to remove those external situations. But, the people in the first stage engage themselves, always and only, in either 'Kamya Karma' or in 'Parihara'.

Thus all the actions of these people, who do not realise their own drawbacks and flaws but find fault with the external things always, fall under the above two types. Referring to the destiny of such people, the 'Upanishad' describes, "Mrityoh sa mrityum aapnoti" (Sanskrit) – 'They proceed from death to death'. How? They would not attempt to transform themselves; instead they would attempt to change the external 'vishaya' (entities -people, objects, and situations). They would keep on changing the objects of their desire; but they would live without

refining their own mind - 'which desires, gets angry, envies, and gets deluded'.

'Tatwa Sastram' ('Vedanta' / 'Spirituality') calls such people as 'Samsaari' (one who is sorrowing), 'Vishayi' (one who is materialistic), 'Karmi' (‘one who is action bound, action ridden’), etc.

What is the main reason that their lives are in this manner?

If we remember the first 'Sutra Vakyam' (Theme Statement), such people find flaws to be outside themselves. They do not notice their own internal flaws. What then is the way out for such people, to advance to the next step? 'Veda mata' (Mother Veda) who is the very personification of compassion, without finding fault with such people and in order to uplift them, gives them the concept of 'Dharma' (Righteousness).

If a person were to lead his life as per 'Dharma' (Righteousness), even if he were engaged in 'Kamya Karma' (desire instigated actions), in course of time he would get as a result of 'Dharma' the due knowledge that elevates him to the second stage. Thus, 'Veda' gives full freedom to a person to enjoy 'Bhoga' (pleasures); but, with the condition

that it should be as per 'Dharma' (Righteous conduct). If one slips from 'Dharma', he falls as a result to a lower (sub-human) level of existence. Pursuing life as per 'Dharma', man rises from the first stage to the second stage.

We have all commenced our lives from this first stage only. The way for uplift for the people in this stage is 'Dharma' (Righteousness).

Second stage:

'Sutra Vakya' states, "When you keep blaming yourself for the sorrows that are experienced by you, then your spiritual practice is under way".

The main reason for our progress from one stage to the next is the knowledge that we have acquired. Let us first understand the nature of the knowledge of the people in this second stage.

When affected by the situations (or people, or objects), their thought pattern would be as follows. "My mind alone is the reason for my feeling sorrow in this situation. If I had not felt the desire in this situation, I would not have sorrow. I need not have felt jealous in this situation; I need not have felt angry; I need not have fallen in delusion. This world does not have the power to give me sorrow. It is only my mind that has given that power. In my

mind, which interprets every experience that I get, there are flaws such as ignorance, desire, weakness, etc. Others have the right to speak insultingly about me, but I alone have the right and power to interpret and take the meaning of those words. Due to my own lack of refinement, I am converting others' words to be the reason for my sorrow. Different situations pass through me, through my mind. I cannot change the situations. I have no right to do that. Instead, I have the right and freedom to change my mind which faces the situation. Others may consider me to be either superior or inferior; it is their wish. It is the right that they have. But, who has the right to take stock of my stature? I alone have that power!"

Each and every experience that one comes across in life is but an incident. Depending on the refinement attained by it, the mind transforms that incident into one of either happiness or sorrow. No object in this world could be said to be causing either pleasure or sorrow. An incident that appears to give pleasure to one person appears to give sorrow to another.

Take for example the instance in Ramayana, when Sri Rama had to go to forest. This single instance gave happiness to Kaikeyi; it caused anger in Lakshmana; and it resulted in sorrow for

the people of 'Ayodhya'. But, the mind of Bhagawan Sri Rama itself was in tranquility.

Let us see the view of some wise men here. A sage stated, “The manner in which the world treats you, is on the basis of what you taught the world”. That is, without your being aware, you have only taught the world as to how it could behave with you.

It is true that 'Circumstance makes you'. It is equally true also that 'Circumstance reveals you'. At this moment, you are reading this book titled 'In the Path of Spirituality'. This is a situation created by you. This situation reveals 'You'. So also, what we see, what we read, what we speak, etc., reveals us.

'Nothing has changed except my attitude. So, everything has changed'.

Why should we not blame the situation? Because it is we, who created the situation! It is enough and sufficient, if we change. Not being aware of this truth, the first stage persons put the blame on the situations, other people (and objects), become slaves to the situations, and in order to escape from the situations might even go to the extent of attempting to commit suicide. Indeed, no problem has come from outside. Our mind alone manifests all the problems. In reality, it is just an appearance

that the outside world is giving sorrow to us. In reality, our enemy or what causes sorrow to us, is our mind only.

'Mana eva manushyaanaam kaaranam
bandha mokshayohu' (Sanskrit)

'It is the mind alone which is the cause for bondage or Moksha (Liberation) of Man'

The truth in this statement by the wise would be realised by us when we become refined enough to recognise that it is indeed our own mind that is the cause for our sorrow.

Bhagawan Sri Krishna also states in 'Bhagawad Gita', "You are your friend; you are your own enemy". The person in the second stage has found out his 'enemy'. Knowing the seat of the enemy is said to be equivalent to achieving half the victory. The other half of the victory is achieved when we convert our foe-like mind to be our friend.

It is not an ordinary task to do the right diagnosis and to identify that such and such is the cause for our sorrow. Upon such a diagnosis, every effort ('Sadhana') that we do would be the right one. And very soon we could reach our goal. All the 'Sadhanas' (practices) which are undertaken by

these second stage people become 'spiritual practices'. These are the persons who have entered Spirituality.

The people in the first stage perform 'Puja' (worship), 'Parayana' (repetitive reading), 'Vrata' (vow), and 'Tapas' (penance). But these do not become spiritual practices. The same 'Sadhanas' (practices), when made by the second stage people become Spiritual practices. From this it becomes clear that, a given practice does not become a spiritual practice by itself. It is depending on the person and his attitude that a 'Sadhana' becomes a 'spiritual practice', or 'Kamya Karma' (desire oriented action). As the second stage people perform the practices with the 'Sankalpa' (intention) of refining their mind, their 'Sadhanas' become spiritual practices. These people might also pray for such things as good health ('Arogyam'). Even if they engage in 'Kamya Karma' (desire based actions), such actions become 'Nishkaama Karma' (desireless actions). They might be experiencing some obstacles and problems. With the intention that only if these obstacles were removed they would be able to engage themselves more fully in spiritual practices, whatever prayer they might do to 'Iswara', such prayers and actions

would not become 'Kamya Karma' (desire based actions).

Our next enquiry is about 'Why our mind is being our enemy', and as to 'How we could befriend such an inimical mind'.

Generally, it is after only our interaction for a period of time with some people, that we antagonise them. But in the case of our mind, right from the very beginning it is inimical to us. Bhagawan Sri Krishna tells in Bhagawad Gita that even from the time of birth, we are born as 'deluded' (under the influence of 'Moha').

"Icchaa dwesha samuttena
dwandwa mohena Bharata
sarva bhuutaani sammoham
sarge yaanti Parantapa " [Sanskrit -B.G 7-27]

'All living beings are deluded right from the time of birth by delusion ('Moha') caused by the pairs of likes and dislikes".

Thus, from the very beginning, the mind is under the control of 'Moha' (delusion). Since characteristics such as likes, dislikes, jealousy, and miserliness are present in the mind, it converts the external situations to give sorrow. These

characteristics are comparable to the acid. Just as the acid attacks the very container which holds it, a mind with such characteristics stays within us and keeps hurting us. If so, should we destroy such a mind itself? To this question, the 'Sastra' advises that such a mind needs only to be transformed. If the sorrow- causing, bad qualities are destroyed and if we develop a mind with good qualities such as peace and love, such a mind becomes our best friend.

How is one to befriend the mind?

We saw that all the actions performed by the people in the second stage would result in the transformation of their mind and that their actions would become Spiritual practice (Adhyatmic Sadhana). We will now see the sequence in their practices (Sadhanas).

As they perform their duties for the sake of mental purity (Chitta suddhi), their actions (Karma) becomes 'Karma Yoga' (Yoga of Action). Why do they perform actions seeking 'Chitta suddhi' (purity of mind); for, they have realized that their own impure minds are responsible for their sorrow. Thereby, the first 'Sadhana' (spiritual practice) that is undertaken by the people in the second stage is 'Karma Yoga'.

The first result of 'Karma Yoga' is the knowledge (discrimination) as to 'what is permanent' and 'what is impermanent' (Nithya- Anithya Vivekam), which is followed by the intense desire to attain the 'Eternal' (Mumukshutwam- desire for liberation), and dispassion (detachment / 'Vairagyam') towards the impermanent. Those who have reached this stage, remove the dirt in the mind (Chitta Asuddhi), reduce the wavering nature of the mind to some extent through practices such as 'Dhyanam' (Meditation), and attain a pure and peaceful mind.

Those who have come to this stage also realise another great truth that 'they have in their mind the ignorance about the 'Truth principle', that is, the ignorance as to “What is my true nature, what is my true state?”. As long as this ignorance is present, there would be a sense of incompleteness (Apoornatwam) in the mind. Their thinking would be thus, "Through the 'Sadhanas' (practices) such as 'Karma Yoga' and 'Dhyana', I have refined my mind to some extent. Following this, to remove this sense of incompleteness, the knowledge about the entity which is ‘Full’ ('Poornam') must be given to the mind. Therefore at this stage, I have to seek that

principle which is 'Full' ('Poornam'/Infinite/ Limitless)".

What we referred to as the 'Full' entity here is termed by 'Vedantic' texts as 'Brahman', 'Atma', etc. Thereby, what such people seek now is 'Atma Jnanam' or 'Brahma Jnanam' (knowledge about Brahman / 'Atma'/ 'I').

Those who have come to this stage (seeking 'Atma Jnanam') undertake 'Sadhanas' (spiritual practices) such as 'Karma Yoga', and 'Dhyana', realise the impermanent (transitory) nature of the world, and have the conviction that they could attain the permanent entity through 'Atma jnanam' (Self-knowledge).

We will see what the next 'Sadhana' is for such people.

Any knowledge could be acquired only through the appropriate instrument that gives such knowledge. The instrument that gives 'Atma Jnanam' is to engage in 'Vedantic enquiry' through a 'Guru' (Vedantic Teacher). When 'Upanishad' which is the ultimate part of 'Veda' is taken and properly enquired into with the support of a 'Guru', the nature of 'Atma' ('Atma Tatwam')

would be understood. The Sadhanas at this stage are said to comprise three steps, namely, 'Sravanam' (listening to 'Vedanta Sastram' from a competent 'Guru'), 'Mananam' (contemplation of the 'Sastram' to remove doubts), and 'Nidhi Dhyasanam' (meditation on the doubtless knowledge that has been obtained about 'Atma').

When 'Sadhanas' are completed in this manner, the person who is in the second stage progresses to the next, third stage. We referred only to the 'Sadhanas' performed by the second stage people as being 'Spiritual Sadhanas'. Their spiritual practices are of several steps, in sequence such as, 'Karma Yogam', 'Dhyanam' ('Upasanam'), 'Sravanam', 'Mananam', and 'Nidhi Dhyasanam'. We saw that there are several steps, in the second stage. Those who have started 'Karma Yogam' have commenced their 'Adhyatmic Sadhanas' (spiritual practices). 'Karma Yogam' has to be continued till one gets the results namely, 'Viveka' (discrimination), 'Vairagyam' (dispassion), 'Mumukshutwam' (keen desire to attain the 'Ultimate'). Thereafter, getting relieved from duties and responsibilities, progressively and in small measures, the 'Sadhaka' (Spiritual aspirant) engages himself for longer durations in 'Sadhanas'

such as 'Dhyanam' (Meditation) and calms his mind to an extent. Getting attracted to 'Vedanta Vicharam' (Spiritual enquiry), it has to be completed properly. When one commences with 'Karma Yogam', and engages himself progressively in 'Sadhanas' (practices) such as 'Dhyanam' (Meditation), 'Vicharam' (Enquiry), 'Mananam' (Contemplation), and 'Nidhi dhyasanam' (Vedantic Meditation), he is considered to be spiritually progressing.

Let us now see the benefit that a third stage person [one who has completed the 'Adhyatmic Sadhanas' (spiritual practices) of the second stage] has obtained.

Third stage:

Sutra Vakyam :-

> "For the sorrows that are experienced by you, when you do not find fault with others, or the circumstances, or yourself, then your 'Spiritual practice' is completed".

Those who have reached this third stage have completed all 'Sadhanas' and have attained the

goal. They are not 'Sadhakas' (Aspirants) but 'Siddhas' (Masters). Their minds would not find fault with either the world or themselves and would be with fullness. Unaffected by external agencies such as cold, heat, insult and praise, their minds would be in a state of equanimity. Describing such people 'Upanishad' states, "Tato na vijugupsate". [Thereafter, they do not blame anyone (anything)]. They do not find fault anywhere. 'Taittiriya Upanishad' states that they do not also find fault with themselves as follows,

"Kim aham saadhu naakaravam,
kim aham papam akaravam
etam ha vaava na tapati."

"Why did I not do the right (good) action?
Why did I do 'Papam' (evil/ negative action)?"
Such thoughts would not afflict him.

That is, they would not engage in self-recrimination. These two 'Upanishad' sentences clearly state that such persons do not complain either about the world or themselves. In Bhagawad Gita (15-20), Bhagawan Sri Krishna calls such third stage people as "Krita krityaha" - "one who has completed what he should accomplish". Their

state is described in many ways thus: 'Further, there is nothing that they have to either do or not do, to attain something or to lose'; 'They are established in a state of fulfillment'; and 'Such of them who are not a hindrance to the world, and the world is not a hindrance to them, they indeed are superior devotees'. The ultimate benefit of all 'Adhyatmic sadhanas' (spiritual practices) is only to attain such a state of mind. For those who have not come to 'Adhyatmic sadhanas' (Spiritual practices), the mind becomes a heavy burden. They are unable to carry (and live with) their own minds. If we analyse calmly, we would realise that the root cause for all our sorrows and problems is our inability to be with our own mind. For those who have reached the goal, their mind is like a mirror. It is reflecting their 'Ananda swaroopam' (intrinsic nature of bliss). They are the ones who are called 'Jivan muktas'. 'Jivan' means, 'even while they are alive', 'Mukti' means 'freedom from the burden of one's own mind' or 'liberation from the lack of fulfillment'. When mind becomes a good vehicle, with its help one could perform the journey of life in this world very comfortably. Thus those who are in the third stage, without finding fault with either the world or themselves, accept everything, and with a fulfilled mind bide the rest of their of lifetime.

Let us see the nature of 'Jnanam' (knowledge) that they have obtained, which resulted in filling the mind (which is difficult to be satiated) and transforming the mind (which is inimical) and befriending it.

'Upanishad' describes their knowledge thus- “Yasmin sarvani bhootani atmaiva abhoot” ['When all the living beings became as oneself']. They see all the living beings as (non-different from) themselves only. They realise themselves as being everything. The central theme of 'Upanishads' is that there is only one 'Truth principle', without a second. A sentence which exhorts this concept is called 'Maha vakyam'.

The 'Guru' (Vedantic teacher) tells the 'Sishya' (qualified disciple)- “Tat Twam Asi” (You are That), that is “You, who are the 'Atma' which is the substratum (base) for this body, are indeed the 'Parabrahman', which is the substratum (base) for the entire creation”. Listening to this teaching, the 'Sishya' understands thus, “Aham Brahma asmi” (I am Brahman').

Upon such an understanding, when he sees the world and all other living beings, he realises that he

is indeed seeing himself. He realises himself as everything.

In 'Chandogya Upanishad' (7 th chapter last part), there are three statements.

i. “sa eva idam sarvam” - 'That' is all 'This'
ii. “aham eva idam sarvam”- 'I' am all 'This'
iii.“Atma eva idam sarvam” -'Atma' alone is all 'This'

All these three statements give the same meaning only. People in the third stage have attained such knowledge. Due to such 'Advaita jnanam' (unitary, non-dualistic knowledge), they have become free from desire, jealousy, insult, etc.

The goal of human life is to attain this knowledge and to fulfill the mind. Those who have attained such goal are in the third stage.

CLOSURE

Man starts his life, putting blame upon the world and finding fault with it. Pursuing his life as per 'Dharma', he has to own up the faults as his own. That is, he has to get the knowledge and realise that he alone is responsible for his present status. As the practices that he undertakes with such knowledge

give him refinement, those practices become 'Adhyatmic Sadhanas' (spiritual practices).

To summarise briefly, the definition of 'Adhyatmic Sadhanas' (spiritual practices) is this:

"All the practices undertaken with the aim of knowing the 'Absolute Reality', and all the practices which are undertaken to become refined to be able to acquire such knowledge about the 'Absolute Reality', become 'Adhyatmic Sadhanas' (spiritual practices)".

2

'AHIMSA' (NON-VIOLENCE)

PREAMBLE

Sages state -

अहिंसा परमो धर्मः

"Ahimsa Paramo Dharmaha" (Sanskrit),
"Ahimsa (Non-violence) is the supreme virtue".

Among the many virtues that we should practice, 'Ahimsa' is most important, superior and difficult to practice. 'Ahimsa' means avoidance of hurt or non-violence.

"Whom should we not hurt?"
'It is avoidance of hurt to us and to the others'.

We cause sorrow to ourselves.
We feel sorrow on account of others, and
We give sorrow to others.

Changing from such a situation, our not feeling sorrow in any manner; and our not giving sorrow to others, is 'Ahimsa'.

Generally, we think that 'Ahimsa' refers only to 'our not causing sorrow to others'. Indeed, 'Ahimsa' should commence with us. Not causing sorrow to ourselves is also 'Ahimsa'. Thereby, 'Ahimsa' is both 'our not getting hurt', and 'we not hurting others'.

Let us investigate 'Ahimsa' which is said to be a 'Maha vrata' (a great austerity).

'AHIMSA LAKSHANAM' (DEFINITION OF 'AHIMSA')

'Ahimsa' is defined thus,

मनो वाक्कायकर्मभिः प्राणिपीठ - अनाचरणम्

"Mano vaak kaaya karmabhihi prani peeda anacharanam" [Sanskrit]

'Avoidance of hurt to living beings, through actions emanating from mind, speech or body'.

Hurting others with the limbs of our body, hurting others with speech, and wishing in our mind that sorrow should befall others and cursing, in these manners, through actions emanating from the three locations, namely, body, speech, and mind, we cause 'Himsa' (hurt) to others. Avoidance of such hurt is termed 'Ahimsa'(Non-violence).

GLORY OF 'AHIMSA'

'Ahimsa' is the primary austerity ('Vratam') that is taken up at the time of taking 'Sanyasa' (Renunciation). Taking the vow, "I will not cause 'Himsa' to any one", is the most important part of the ritual at the time when one takes 'Sanyasa'.

At the time of taking the 'Vratam' the 'Sanyasi' (Renunciant) addresses 'Devatas' (divine beings) thus, "Do not be afraid of me. I do not seek your positions. I will not give you sorrow". He addresses the birds, "You need not be scared of me anymore. I will not cause sorrow to you". In the same manner, he gives an assurance to the other living beings that he would cause sorrow to them.

While practicing other spiritual disciplines such as 'Sense control' and to be in the state of 'Sanyasa' (renunciation), the most important virtue that is to be followed is 'Ahimsa'. Being the foremost among

the many austerities, 'Ahimsa' is called a 'Maha-vratam' (great austerity). 'Ahimsa' is an austerity to be followed in all 'Asramas' (stations of life), but for the 'Sanyasi' (Renunciant) it is of utmost importance.

'Uyirku urukan seyyamai tavattirku uru'
[Tamil] - Sage Tiruvalluvar

'Not causing harm to any living being is
the hall mark of 'Tapas' (Penance)'

NEED FOR 'AHIMSA'

If we desire to refine ourselves and succeed in the worldly life and in the spiritual life, 'Ahimsa' is the most important virtue to be practiced. Many erroneously think that it is not possible to practice 'Ahimsa'.

Experiencing sorrow is an inevitable part of life. It is but natural that everyone has to per force experience difficulties. Even at the time of birth, we arrive in this world with tears. The very first experience that this world gives us is sorrow.

After birth, we experience sorrow for reasons such as hunger, and disease. In a house where there are children, we hear sounds of laughter at

times and crying sounds at other times. Sorrow is thus an unavoidable part of life. Many times, we get refinement on account of sorrow. At times, while attempting to avoid sorrow, we happen to experience even greater sorrow. Moreover, in nature's scheme of things, we observe that for the survival of a living being, another being is required to die.

Such being the case, "Where does 'Ahimsa' or non-violence fit in?", "Is 'Ahimsa' a virtue that could be practiced?", "Is it necessary?". Having such doubts, some people conclude that 'Ahimsa' is a discipline that cannot be practiced.

If one were to understand the nature of 'Ahimsa' with clarity, then it would be clear that 'Ahimsa' is indeed a virtue that has to be pursued, and that it could be practiced.

The natural, unavoidable difficulties that occur to our physical body are not being referred to as 'Himsa' (Hurt). 'Himsa' is the sorrow that a person causes to the others, due to reasons such as hatred, jealousy, and anger. Wherever it is possible for one to avoid giving sorrow to another, such avoidance of giving sorrow is 'Ahimsa'. Giving punishment to others, with the intention of correcting them, for the sake of their welfare, does not become 'Himsa'.

Thus, the incidental pain that is inflicted by the doctor to the patient, the punishment given by the teacher to the erring student, and the corrective punishment given by the parents to their children, do not become 'Himsa'. Thereby, understanding clearly as to 'What 'Himsa' is' and 'What 'Ahimsa' is', practicing 'Ahimsa' and elevating ourselves becomes our prime duty.

Our progress can not come from the tears of others. We are able to get elevated, only when we bless the world and when the world also blesses us.

Studying is the most important 'Dharma' (duty) for the students. For the householder 'Danam' (charity), 'Karma Yoga' (right action with the right attitude), etc., are the important duties. So also, though 'Ahimsa' is an important common value to be pursued by every one, for persons who having entered spiritual life, are desirous of calming their minds, are desirous of attaining knowledge about the Ultimate Reality, and are desirous of becoming free from all bondages, 'Ahimsa' becomes a very, very important 'Dharma' (discipline).

To the extent we don't hurt others,
To that extent we don't get hurt.

While one experiences sorrow, his mind would be disturbed and without peace. In such a mind, there cannot be focus and concentration. If the mind is disturbed, the discriminatory faculty of the intellect would not function. Therefore, for our mind to function as a proper instrument to uplift us, it should be free from flaws such as sorrow, feeling of guilt, disturbance, and confusion. Then alone would the mind function as a good instrument for us. And our spiritual travel would proceed without hurdles. Therefore 'Sadhakas' (spiritual aspirants), should pursue the 'Dharma' (discipline) of 'Ahimsa' as vital.

To be able to practice the value 'Ahimsa', the assistance of certain other virtues should be taken. It is only with the help of such supportive values could we pursue 'Ahimsa'. So also, to give up 'Himsa' (violence), we should give up certain negative qualities. Just as a single sling shot yields multiple fruits, when we take up the single value of 'Ahimsa', several good qualities come to us, and several negative qualities leave us.

REASONS FOR 'HIMSA' (VIOLENCE)

In order to practice the value 'Ahimsa', at first, we should know the reasons on account of which we continue to cause sorrow to others. Thereafter,

by removing those reasons, we could practice 'Ahimsa'.

Now, let us see the reasons for which we cause sorrow to others. There are several reasons why we hurt us, and hurt others. Among these, we will briefly see how we are causing 'Himsa' (hurt) to others for reasons such as

1.Hatred,
2.Anger,
3.Jealousy,
4.Revengeful attitude,
5. For the sake of getting a task done,
6.Lack of attention, and
7. Lack of refinement.

1. Hatred: When we hate a person, we cause sorrow to him. Hatred is a feeling that we have ourselves cultivated in the mind. In general, we would not have hatred towards a person initially. But, when his actions and qualities are not acceptable to us, we gradually cultivate hatred towards that person. Such hatred becomes the reason for us to hurt them, through our speech, physical actions, and mentally. When hatred takes over either teachers or parents, who are intent on correcting a child, they tend to give punishment that is excessive for the mistake committed. Such

excessive punishment becomes ‘Himsa’ (Violence). Thus, punishment, per se, is not ‘Himsa’, but functioning under the influence of hatred is ‘Himsa’.

When hatred manifests in our mind against a person, we realise that our mind is without peace and in a difficult state. Hatred causes ‘Himsa’ to us, to start with, and then only results in ‘Himsa’ (hurt) to others. Whenever others suffer 'Himsa' on account of us, we are suffering to start with. Therefore, in effect, we are hurting ourselves and are hurting others.

2. Anger : When we come under the influence of anger, at that time we subject others to sorrow which is commensurate with the extent of our anger. Once our anger subsides, we would feel sorry that we have hurt them. Even with people to whom we are attached, while we are angry, we lose our control and hurt them. Just as we cause hurt to those whom we hate, so do we hurt those whom we like.

We get angry and upset due to lack of patience. When we lack patience, we use harsh words and hurt others' minds. We would tend to justify that we are criticising them only when they commit a mistake. But on other occasions, when some others commit similar mistakes, though we are

aware we would keep quiet. When patience is lost, we are overcome by anger and engage in 'Himsa' to others. Parents often hurt their children, on account of lack of patience.

3. Jealousy: Like cancer, without we being aware, jealousy is present in us. Jealousy is a despicable quality. A mind that is unable to accept other's progress, engages in scheming and 'Himsa'. Without being happy with whatever we have, contemplating on what we do not have, we feel sorry. Then, seeing what others have, we feel jealous and cause 'Himsa' to them. As soon as jealousy sprouts in the mind, sorrow also sprouts. King Duryodhana lived all his life in a palace. Pandavas happened to live in the forest for several years. Yet, it was Duryodhana who experienced maximum sorrow in life. The reason was the jealousy that was in him.

Attempting to kindle envy in others' minds is also a kind of 'Himsa' (violence). When we acquire a new object, we not only show it to our neighbours, but also go on to point out that they do not have that item. On this account, the feeling of jealousy sprouts in them. As a result, the feeling of envy is kindled in their minds. If we have forms of wealth such as money or intelligence, demonstrating them and behaving with vanity cultivates jealousy in the minds of people around us. Such behaviour is also

'Himsa'. Thus, our feeling jealous, and our instigating others to feel jealous are both 'Himsa' (violence) only.

Besides causing 'Himsa' (sorrow) both to others and to us, jealousy prevents us from enjoying what we have attained, just like Duryodhana who was lying on the most comfortable bed in his palace but was fuming, thinking about Pandavas who were blissfully sleeping in the forest.

Thus, jealousy happens to be an important reason for 'Himsa' (violence).

4. Revengeful Attitude: When some one causes sorrow to us, a revengeful feeling is instigated in us that we should retaliate and cause even greater sorrow to them than what we had experienced. Thus, it is the sorrow that we had experienced which becomes the seed for the sorrow that we inflict to others. Thereby, if we protect ourselves without feeling sorrow, we would not attempt to hurt others.

You give what you get.

When a clan of people subjugates and enslaves another clan and subjects them to sorrow, the victimised group thinks that the policy of seeking revenge is just, and that it is in the spirit of sacrifice, and it indulges in destructive actions. If an individual

had experienced excessive sorrow in his childhood on account of his parents, the society, economic conditions, or such other reasons, only violence ('Himsa') would be residing in his mind.

Also in the society, instead of highlighting the greatness of forgiveness, the pursuit of revenge is being projected as the symbol for success. The central theme of many cinemas happens to be this 'tit for tat' ('eye for the eye', revengeful) approach. The external environment is sowing thoughts such as, "If I am attacked and if I retaliate in the same manner, then I am a successful person". Forgiveness is being projected as weakness, and retaliation for an attack as being a heroic deed. Such thinking as, "If one wounds me by his speech, in equal measure I should hurt him through my words. Then alone will my mind get solace", is the reason for 'Himsa' (violence).

If a person continues to hurt others, it means that the sorrow (hurt), that he had experienced some time earlier has got lodged in his subconscious mind, and has become the reason for his hurting others. His mind thinks that only when revenge is taken, the scores would be settled. A person who harms the society today would definitely be one who has been affected in someway in the past. Such persons could only be reformed by affection.

Indeed, when we take revenge on others, in reality we are becoming the victims.

5. For the sake of getting a task done: In order to get desired task performed, we are employing 'Himsa' (violence) as a tool. Upon giving a task to our subordinates, when they either delay the task or when they do not perform it correctly, we make it a habit to hurt them with harsh words. In the villages to get the bullock carts go fast, the bullocks are beaten and subjected to 'Himsa'. When children resist adamantly, in matters such as taking food, parents create fear in their minds to achieve the results. Creating fear in others' minds is indeed a great violence. In this manner, for the sake of getting our task done, we are using 'Himsa' as an instrument.

6. Lack of attention: On occasions, others get hurt just due to our lack of attention. In particular, our words cause sorrow to many. Indeed, it might not at all be our intention to wound. Yet, others would experience sorrow. The reason for this is our lack of attention. At times, we use some words in a casual, playful manner. Those words might hurt others' minds. We should handle our words carefully. If we don't do so, such words cease to be instruments for communication and exchange of ideas, instead they become weapons to wound others' minds.

7. Lack of Refinement: Culture is orderly social behaviour or manners. While in public, discipline is required in things such as our dress, behaviour, and manner of speech. Discipline is necessary in all aspects such as wearing clean and proper dress, keeping our body clean, and the manner in which we eat, the manner in which we speak in public, and the words that we employ should be civilised.

Suppose there is a boy who has lost his father. We notice that some uncivilised persons point out to him 'as one who has swallowed his father'. So also, we see people hurting the sentiments of others using words such as 'blind fellow' while hailing a person who is visually challenged, 'deaf fellow' while hailing a person who is hard of hearing, and 'lame fellow' to address a person who has lost his legs. It is 'Himsa' (violence) meted out to the person who has a physical handicap, to hail him mentioning that handicap, to talk derisively, or to name him mentioning that handicap. Those who point out the handicap of others, thinking that it is fun or humour, and those who speak insultingly of others not realising the extent of hurt that they are inflicting, are indeed uncivilised people.

Thus, we can identify many reasons for our causing 'Himsa' to others. In the above, we have seen only a few general reasons. By introspection, we could find out few more reasons for the 'Himsa'

that we inflict. If such reasons are removed, we would cease to cause sorrow to others. The result of this would be that, 'we would not feel sorrow', and 'our mind would function as a good companion to us'.

Let us now investigate the consequences of 'Himsa'.

CONSEQUENCES OF 'HIMSA' (VIOLENCE)

When seen from the stand point of 'Dharma Sastra' (Code of Ethics), causing 'Himsa' to others gives the result of 'Papam' (sin/ demerit) to the person. The consequence of such 'Papam' (demerit) is sorrow. The 'Papam' due to physical actions affects one's body. The 'Papam' resulting from speech would result in the person getting hurt by others' words. The 'Papam' caused by one's mind (thoughts) would affect the person's mind.

The sorrow that we inflict on others returns back to us. Therefore, in order that we be free from sorrow, we should not cause sorrow to others.

'Dharma Sastram' states that the good that we do to others yields us the result of 'Punyam' (merit), and the harm that we do to others gives us the

result of ‘Papam’ (demerit). ‘Punyam’ gives us happiness and progress in our spiritual life. 'Papam' yields sorrow and places hurdles in our life, and keeps us in a lower stage without any progress.

Even in our experience we observe that, to whomever we cause sorrow, enmity develops with them. They too would be waiting for an occasion to give us sorrow. If we were to transform the people who are around us into our enemies, what else could we have in our mind, except fear!

Moreover, when we hate a person and give sorrow to him, there would only be lack of peace in our mind. We would also be feeling sorry, in a way. Such a sorrowful mind would be a restless mind. And such restless mind is not a suitable instrument for our spiritual practice.

If we continue to cause ‘Himsa’ to others, our mind would lose its sensitive nature. A mind without sensitivity cannot realise subtle truths. Development of the mind is only to make it both steadfast and sensitive. Such a development of the mind would not come if one engages in ‘Himsa’ (violence). This is a great truth realised from the experience of those who have attained developed minds.

TECHNIQUES TO PRACTICE 'AHIMSA' (NON-VIOLENCE)

To practice the virtue of 'Ahimsa', the support of certain other values is necessary. Just as discipline is essential, in matters such as food, sleep, and activity, for 'Dhyanam' (meditation) to be successful, so also, certain other disciplines are necessary to be able to practice 'Ahimsa'.

There are several techniques to practice 'Ahimsa'. Among them, we will briefly discuss techniques such as

1. 'Sankalpam' (Vow or Resolve)
2. Removal of hatred
3. Giving up Anger
4. Removal of jealousy
5. Forgiveness
6. Restraint in speech
7. 'Karuna' (Kindness)
8. Non-practice of Untouchability
9. Avoiding meat eating
10. Protecting oneself
11. 'Prarthana' (Prayer), and
12. 'Jnanam' (Self-knowledge).

1. Sankalpam (Vow / Resolve): To imbibe any virtue as our own, we should first take a vow (or resolve) in our mind that we should attain it without fail. That virtue should become our 'Lakshyam' (Goal). Whatever becomes our 'Goal', thoughts about that goal would always be in our mind. So, in order to think about something always, it should be made our goal. Taking a 'Sankalpam'(resolve) means, 'thinking about the same item incessantly'. When 'practising the value of Ahimsa' becomes our goal, thoughts about that value would always be occurring in our mind. And whatever our mind repeatedly thinks about, we would attain that goal very soon. Indeed, our mind would itself search for ways and means to attain the virtue and would engage us in the necessary action. Just as little drops of water together make a mighty flood, when we repeatedly think about the same object our thought gains strength. Such strength engages us in the necessary efforts, and whatever be the obstacles, they would be surmounted. To acquire the strength in the resolve to follow 'Ahimsa', we should realise the need for 'Ahimsa' and its greatness, in our intellect.

What you do to others, you do to yourself.

If we harm others, indeed, we are only harming ourselves. When we inflict sorrow on others, we are

only giving sorrow to us. When we love others, indeed we love ourselves. We could notice that when we shower affection on others, there is joy in our mind; and when hatred sprouts in our mind, we experience irritation. That is, whichever emotion we might direct at others, at first without our being aware, that emotion is directed at ourselves. Only later, that emotion reaches others. Therefore, if we do not wish to feel sorrow, we should not hurt others. If we realise this truth, 'Ahimsa' would definitely become our goal.

To attain any virtue, 'Sankalpam' is essential. Hence, the first technique to pursue 'Ahimsa' is to keep 'Ahimsa' as our goal, and to incessantly repeat the thought flow in our mind that "we should practice Ahimsa".

2. Removal of Hatred: When we remove hatred from our mind, we could free ourselves from 'Himsa'. In general, we develop the feeling of hatred towards those who commit mistakes, or those who give sorrow to us, or to those whom we love. We have to understand a subtle point here. We could dislike the wrong action or wrong character of an individual, but, we should not hate that person. The person is different, and his action, quality is different. In a cinema, we do not hate the actor who plays the role of the villain; we dislike the action that comes from him and the quality that he

has. Thus, the person different; and the action that emanates from him is different. If this is understood, it would be clear that no one deserves to be hated. All the same, it is good to keep away from people with evil actions.

Evil is different, and evil person is different. No one is a bad person. Even he might reform himself, is it not! Indeed, there is no person who is evil; evil alone is there. Therefore, it is not necessary to hate a person who engages in evil actions. One should learn to see a person with bad quality and evil actions, as a mentally sick person. One need not hate a sick person; he should be given the treatment that is needed. Even if such a treatment (the punishment) gives him sorrow, it would not tantamount to 'Himsa'. Instead, if we were to cultivate hatred against that person, it is 'Himsa' to us and 'Himsa' to that person. In the initial stages of our spiritual journey, we might hate evil actions; but we do not have to hate the persons with evil quality always. Upon refinement of our mind, we would not hate anything. In this manner, as we gradually remove hatred little by little from our mind, we would become free from 'Himsa'.

3. Giving up Anger: That it is difficult to pursue 'Ahimsa', would be evident from the statement that 'One should give up anger'. If we were to merely tell a peson some five times, "Please don't

get angry!", that individual would surely get provoked and angry. Thus for most people, 'anger' has become the very nature. To acquire the virtue - 'Ahimsa', the negative quality of 'anger' has to be definitely given up. We saw that if we cultivate just the one value - 'Ahimsa', several other values would come to us along with it. There is nothing that cannot be achieved through serious effort. As the habit of getting angry is reduced progressively, one gets freedom from 'Himsa'. Anger is comparable to the acid. Acid attacks the container which holds it, at first, and later the items that are put into it. So also, anger causes 'Himsa' at first to the person who gets angry, and later to the person at whom anger is directed. Anger is said to be 'a destroyer of its associates'. It is like a piece of wood which burns itself and burns also things that are associated with it. While under the influence of anger, we cause sorrow to those to whom we are attached, and later we too feel sorrow.

Therefore, we must practice to give up anger, which is responsible for such emotions as guilt feeling, enmity, 'Papam' (sin), and 'Himsa'.

4. Removal of Jealousy: A mind that is happy to see others' success becomes divine. We should practice to be contented with what we have. A Tamil proverb states, "A mind which is contented is

an alchemical (which could convert whatever it touches to gold)”. Only such person, who removes jealousy from his mind, could get rid of acts of 'Papam' (evil). Based on one’s effort, and ‘Karma phalam’ (result of past actions), the present life and comforts result. We have certain types of wealth; others have certain other types of wealth. No single person has all the wealth, knowledge, beauty, and different types of skills and arts to the maximum extent. We should learn to be content with whatever we have and should learn to be happy. And we should give up the habit of comparing us with others. It is because of such comparison that jealousy develops. If magnanimity develops in us, we would see the wealth which others might have, and appreciate the same. Whatever we deserve to get, such wealth Bhagawan has given to us. Whatever we do not deserve to get, Bhagawan has denied us such wealth. If we get something that we don’t deserve, it would only lead to our destruction and not to our uplift. That is why in the ‘Upanishad’ prayer for wealth, one prays,

ततो मे श्रियं आवह

“tato me sriyam aavaha”(Sanskrit)
“Thereafter, may I be blessed with wealth!”

"Thereafter, upon my getting sufficient mental maturity, may I be blessed with wealth!".

When we do not have adequate maturity, if wealth, power, position, fame, etc., were to come, they would destroy us very soon. We should understand the secret that, Bhagawan has indeed protected us by not giving us certain types of wealth. That is why, a 'Thanks giving' prayer reads thus.

"O Bhagawan! I express my gratitude to you once, for whatever you have given me. And O Bhagawan! For whatever you have refused to give me, I am grateful manifold".

Is it not a blessing not to have some material wealth, in order to receive the wealth of Bhagawan's grace!

If we realise that not having a certain type of wealth is for our good only, where is the occasion for jealousy and craving!

Due to the development of throat cancer, Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was not able to take food. Many felt sorry for him. But, he was established in the knowledge that he was

the in-dweller of all living beings. So, seeing other living beings taking food, he was happy in the thought that he himself was eating.

If one were to eat a variety of foods, in front of a sick person who is unable to eat, it is but natural that the sick person would feel jealous of the one who is eating. But, people like the Ramakrishna Paramahamsa have attained the great state of seeing themselves in all the living beings. In such a state, jealousy would not develop at others, for there is no one else.

Through proper thinking, one should practice to remove jealousy. As jealousy is removed steadily from our mind, we would feel happy, and those who are dependent on us would also be happy.

5. Forgiveness: It has been our habit to inflict sorrow upon those who cause sorrow to us. Such revengeful attitude is the chief cause for 'Himsa' (violence). If we practice to forgive people who inflict sorrow to us, we would be able to give up 'Himsa'. It is wrong to consider forgiveness as a sign of weakness or cowardice. Indeed, great strength is required to be able to forgive. Forgiveness is true success. While forgiving, we only are the first beneficiary. Feelings such as hatred, enmity, and anger get removed and our mind experiences peace.

Let us assume that some one has harmed us. When it is suggested that we should forgive him, the intention is not to justify his action to be correct. What he did was indeed wrong; and he would have to face the appropriate punishment for it. That is nature's law.

When we seek to take revenge, we get affected on two occasions. The first time we were affected was when he caused us harm. When we retaliate and harm him, we are committing the same mistake that he did and we get affected a second time, acquiring 'Papam' (demerit) and sorrow.

When someone steals from us, if we retaliate and kill him, we get affected by the result. But if a police officer does it, it is not 'Adharma' (non-righteous). Thereby forgiving results in good to us, to start with. Giving appropriate punishment to the erring person is 'Dharma' (righteous conduct). Even while dispensing the punishment, the value of forgiveness should be practiced in our mind. Just as we feel mentally peaceful and happy when another person pardons our mistake, so also, others would feel happy when we forgive them for their mistakes. And, we too would feel happy. When some one causes us hurt, if we recognise factors such as his ignorance, his incapacity, and him

having a previously wounded mind, we would be in a position to forgive him. When we remember the sorrows given to us by this world and keep on adding them up, our mental baggage becomes heavier. In order that our mind becomes light, we should practice to forgive. Forgive and see! You would realise that your mind floats in peace.

In the initial stages, forgiving would appear to be an act of sacrifice (Tyagam), a virtue. But in reality, forgiving is only rectifying our own prior mistake. To start with we have mentally blamed another person for causing us a difficulty. Forgiveness is our act of retribution for putting that blame on him. In reality, no one can give sorrow to another. Due to ignorance, incapacity, and lack of maturity in our mind, we point at some one as being the cause for our sorrow. If our mind is refined, who ever has the strength to hurt us! If we are feeling hurt, is not the flaw in our mind only! Forgiveness is only the withdrawal of the blame that we had foisted on him. Even if this subtle concept is not understood initially, let us at least take forgiveness to be an act of sacrifice on our part and start practicing it. Let us lighten our mental burden; let us give up 'Himsa'.

6. Restraint in Speech: Restraint in speech is disciplining of our speech, regulating the words that come forth from us. We experience maximum sorrow and give maximum sorrow to others, through

speech only. Word is being wielded as a weapon. A Tamil proverb states, 'The wound caused by the tongue would not heal'. It is through speech that most of the 'Himsa' is being inflicted. When there is discipline in speech, the extent of 'Himsa' reduces by a great degree. Thinking that we are being plain, if we speak whatever occurs to our mind, our speech would hurt many. Words are like sharp weapons. Only those who get attacked by a weapon would know the pain. If our words are careless, many would get victimised.

Some may think, "After all, we are only speaking the truth". But, such truth should be expressed in a gentle manner. If indeed there is no gentleness in the expression of truth, the value of such truth diminishes. While pointing out to someone's mistake, though there is truth in our statement, if there is no gentleness in the manner of pointing out, harm would only result instead of good. We should practice to present the truth in such a gentle manner that the others' mind is prepared to receive and accept it. If others do not have the strength to digest the truth, hiding such a truth is also 'Ahimsa'. This is comparable to the case of the doctor, who knows when to divulge the details about the severe disease of the patient, depending on the mental state of the latter.

Every one likes to talk, but listeners are too few. As one listens more and more, one's wisdom and mental maturity grow. As one speaks more and more, wisdom and mental strength decrease. 'Not speaking more than required' is by itself 'Ahimsa'. When we are silent, others do not have the difficulty of having to listen to us. And at the times of our silence, many escape from our sharp, arrow-like words. Therefore, silence becomes 'Ahimsa'. And 'abiding in silence' becomes a 'Maha vratam' (great austerity).

The reason for most relationships to break up is the careless usage of words. If our tongue is under our control, those who come to us are saved from the attack of our arrow-like words. Sri Adi Sankara had said that only those who have self-control would be able to practice 'Ahimsa'. It is not just our speech, but all other senses should as well be disciplined. Then alone could we practice 'Ahimsa'. The manner in which we see could hurt others. Putting blame on others, throwing objects, and such mistakes, are the result of lack of sense control. By disciplining our speech, we protect ourselves and we also protect others. Thus, in order to protect all, let us practice silence.

7. 'Karuna' (Compassion): When 'Karuna' (Compassion) and love develop in the mind,

'Himsa' disappears. 'Karuna' is a feeling mixed with love that develops towards other living beings. From the words of Saint Vallalar, "Whenever I see the crops which have withered for want of water, I feel anguish", the sensitivity of his mind is evident. 'Karuna' is the feeling that develops towards the people who suffer. Without thoughts such as, "They have to per force suffer in this manner only"; "Let them experience the consequences of their own 'Papam' (demerit)"; and "They deserve it", we should feel 'Karuna' (Compassion) in our mind. Such feeling of 'Karuna' will protect our mind from evil thoughts such as cursing others, and desiring that evil befall others. 'Vedantic' teaching that "The world is just an appearance (Maya)", is not meant to take away the feeling of 'Karuna' from our mind. Indeed, to be able to understand 'Vedanta', the mind should be the repository of love and 'Karuna'. Only in such a mind would other virtues such as 'Tyaga' (sense of sacrifice), and 'Vairagya' (lack of attachment to 'Bhoga' or pleasures) develop. Intellect would become sharper and would acquire the power to understand subtler concepts. Acquiring 'Vairagya' (detachment) does not mean giving up 'Karuna' and love. The prime teaching ('Upadesa') of 'Vedanta' is, "You should see yourself in all living beings". Only when one has 'Karuna' in the mind, would one realise others'

sorrow as one's own. "What is not fit for me is not fit for others". Should we not realise that the sorrow which is experienced by other living beings as our own!.

If decayed and spoiled food stuff is not fit for our consumption, then they are not fit for others as well. Giving such food to the poor people who work in our house becomes 'Himsa'. Whatever we do to ourselves, same should be done to others. To be able to behave in this manner, we should cultivate 'Karuna' (Compassion) and love.

8. Eradication of Untouchability: Untouchability is a serious disease that has afflicted the human race. The physical bodies of all beings are but combinations of the five basic elements (Pancha bhutas); they are made of food; are protected by food; and are going to end up as food (for other life forms). Such being the case, creating an imaginary difference termed 'caste' ('Jaati', birth), to segregate a person as an untouchable becomes 'Himsa'. There could be some justification, if one is considered to be inferior on the basis of one's character and qualities. But, to consider one as inferior based of an imaginary consideration called caste is 'Himsa'. Thus, in order to practice 'Ahimsa', one should give up attachment to caste

and become free from the disease called untouchability.

9. Avoiding meat eating: Avoidance of non-vegetarian food is 'Ahimsa'. Killing animal bodies in order to grow the human body is 'Himsa'. We might get a doubt at this stage. "Even when vegetarian food is taken, the bodies of plants such as trees, creepers, vegetables, and fruits are being destroyed. Plants are also living beings. In this case also killing of living beings is not being avoided. Such being the case, how does the killing of animal bodies alone become 'Himsa'?".

At times in our life situations arise, when we are compelled to select between two difficult alternatives. And we too select the alternative that results in lesser difficulty. When we fall sick, we have the situation of having to take a medicine and get cured. If we don't take the medicine, the effect would be major. But, when we take the medicine, we get affected by the side effects. Between these alternatives, we opt for the alternative of taking the medicines, despite having to face the side effects. Otherwise, we would be affected to a greater extent.

In the same manner, the 'Himsa' caused to the plants when we take vegetarian food is of a lesser degree than the 'Himsa' caused to animals, if we

were to kill them for food. When we kill the animals, they experience great sorrow. This is not so, in the case of plants. Thereby, opting for the lesser 'Himsa', between the two 'Himsas', becomes 'Ahimsa'. We are able to perceive the sorrow and pain of animals. Plants, whose organs are less developed, do not experience and express pain and sorrow to that extent.

Like humans, animals have five sensory organs, namely, body (touch), mouth (taste), eyes (sight), nose (smell) and ears (sound). Beings such as snake have four senses. Certain other living beings have three or two senses. Plants have only a single sense. As the number of senses increases, the experience of pleasure and pain increases. When we use plants that have only a single sense as our food, the inflicted pain and sorrow is lower. If we were to take the bodies of animals, which have five senses just like us as our food, the resulting sorrow and pain are greater.

Moreover, human body could survive and live well with just vegetarian food. When it is possible to live with just vegetarian food, utilising such an opportunity is 'Ahimsa'. Animals such as the lion and the tiger have not been given the opportunity or choice of surviving with vegetarian food. Such wild animals do not acquire sin (Papam) by taking meat.

Animals such as goats and cows are created such that they could take only vegetarian food. They do not opt for vegetarian food by their choice. Thereby, they do not acquire ‘Punyam’ by taking vegetarian food. But, man has been given the choice or free-will to do either ‘Punyam’ or ‘Papam’. Isn't avoiding ‘Papam’ ‘Ahimsa’! Thus, avoiding non-vegetarian food and attempting to practice ‘Ahimsa’ is better.

10. Self protection: To begin with, we should all practice to be in the path of ‘Dharma’. While we are living as per ‘Dharma’, if someone attempts to cause sorrow to us in an ‘Adharmic’ manner, protecting ourselves from that is ‘Ahimsa’ only. Self protection is not selfishness; it is indeed protection of ‘Dharma’ only.

The following is a well known story. A certain snake was harming many people. A 'Mahatma' (sage) who was passing by, advised the snake to abide by ‘Ahimsa’ and to not harm anyone, and he went his way. Noticing that the snake had become calm, the children of the village started hitting it with stones playfully. When the 'Mahatma' happened to come again after a while, he found that the snake was seriously bruised and was experiencing severe pain. He enquired as to how the snake came to such plight. The snake replied

that it was the result of following his advice to practice 'Ahimsa'. The sage then clarified, "I had only asked you not to harm; I did not ask you not to hiss". When the children of the village saw the snake hiss, they avoided going near it any further.

In the 'Vedic' injunction, "Do not inflict sorrow to anyone", the word 'anyone' includes us also. Protecting ourselves, such that others do not attack us, is 'Ahimsa' only, just like protecting others.

11.'Prarthana' (Prayer): 'Prarthana' means praying to 'Iswara'. In the present context, 'Prarthana' is praying thus to 'Iswara', "May I be able to practice Ahimsa", and seeking that virtue.

A person, who is poor and who does not have the means to live, seeks food as alms and gets it. Begging is poverty's lowest state that could befall one. The beggar loses his self respect entirely. When we stand before 'Iswara' as a beggar, our arrogance is totally gone. We then become a devotee ('Bhakta').

Devotees are begging from 'Iswara' for all and sundry things. Here, we are begging for the virtue of 'Ahimsa'. Why should we beg?

Just as one who is unable to earn a living begs for his food, we are without sufficient strength to be able to practice ‘Ahimsa’. When we realise our lack of strength, we approach ‘Iswara’ for the strength. Just like ‘Sugriva’ who sought the strength of Sri Rama to win over ‘Vali’, if we pray to ‘Iswara’ whom we worship, we would be blessed with the required strength to practice ‘Ahimsa’.

For any ‘Karma’ (action) there would definitely be the due ‘Phalam’ (result). ‘Prarthana’ is a ‘Karma’ (action). Thereby when we pray, we would get the corresponding result. The extent to which our prayer is sincere, faithful, heart-felt, and steadfast, to that extent, we would get the result.

‘Prarthana’ is the most ideal technique to achieve anything in life. Let us pray to ‘Iswara’ to be able to practice ‘Ahimsa’.

12. Knowledge: Pursuing ‘Ahimsa’ with the help of ‘Jnanam’ (knowledge) is possible only for ‘Jnanis’ (wise people). In this context, ‘Jnanam’ (knowledge) which is referred to is ‘Atma Jnanam’ (Self-knowledge) or ‘Brahma Jnanam’ (Knowledge of Brahman) or knowledge of the 'Absolute Principle'. Those who have attained ‘Atma Jnanam’ (Self-knowledge) would practice

'Ahimsa' totally. The knowledge that they have acquired is the true answer to the question, "Who am I?". One, who has realised 'Who he is', sees 'himself' in all the living beings. Those who are ignorant of 'Atma Jnanam' think that they are seeing themselves, only when they look into a mirror. But the 'Jnani' (-who has 'Self knowledge'-) realises that whatever he sees when his eyes are open, is only 'himself'! As the 'Jnani' realises that 'he is as all the living beings', whom could he hurt! Bhagawan Sri Krishna states in Bhagawad Gita that the 'Jnani' cannot hurt himself either.

न हिनस्ति आत्मना आत्मानं

"Na hinasti atmanaa atmaanam"[Sanskrit]
'He does not give sorrow to himself'

To one who has achieved control of his senses and control of his mind, and has acquired 'Atma Jnanam' (Self-knowledge), practising 'Ahimsa' becomes an easy and natural task.

In the above, we briefly saw some reasons for causing 'Himsa', and a few techniques to pursue 'Ahimsa'.

Each person inflicts ‘Himsa’ due to some reason and each one could be having a particular reason. Therefore, we should investigate and find out the reason on account of which we are giving sorrow to others, and should remove that particular reason. For example, the main reason for Duryodhana to cause ‘Himsa’ to Pandavas was jealousy. ‘Kama’ (Desire) was the chief reason for the 'Himsa’ caused by Ravana. The reason for ‘Himsa’ by Hiranya Kasipu was ‘Garvam’ (arrogance). Some kings indulged in actions of ‘Himsa’, such as the hunting of animals, as a pastime. ‘Himsa’ has become a pastime for some people. One should investigate the reason why one is engaged in ‘Himsa’, remove that reason, and practice ‘Ahimsa’.

In the study of ‘Ahimsa’, we should understand yet another important point.

WHEN ‘HIMSA’ BECOMES ‘AHIMSA’

Some people mistakenly think that, "Those who live in the society cannot practice ‘Ahimsa’. Only those who have renounced the society would be able to practice 'Ahimsa' ".

When a police officer faces the situation of having to shoot a criminal who is destroying the society, if he were to shoot and kill that criminal, then he is only practicing 'Ahimsa' quite well. By killing an evil person, the police officer has saved the lives of many. Indeed, killing such an evil person is good for that person and is also good for the society. In this case, 'Himsa' itself becomes 'Ahimsa'. Instead, if the police officer were to release the criminal, it would become 'Himsa'. The common man doesn't have the right to punish a criminal; it is a crime if he were to attack a criminal. Only the police officer has the right to punish criminals. That right itself is his duty. The 'Himsa', which results when he performs his duty, becomes 'Ahimsa'. Similarly, the punishment given by a judge to a criminal is 'Ahimsa'.

If 'Ahimsa' is misunderstood and practiced, it would result in 'Himsa' of great magnitude. Suppose a person is killing others in order to acquire wealth illegally or due to wrong ideology. The society would function properly, only if such a person is given the punishment that he deserves, but with compassion and without hatred. Such punishment could even be the death sentence. The removal of his physical body which is responsible for him to commit 'Papam' (sin), is comparable to the removal of a weapon from an attacking person.

A judge delivered a sentence thus, “I award you the death sentence. I pray to God that your soul may attain peace and you get a good path”.

In this instance, there is no hatred; there is no intention to seek revenge. Yet, ‘Himsa’ is happening. Such a ‘Himsa’ is indeed ‘Ahimsa’.

‘Dharma sastra’ states thus, "In order to save our whole body, if one limb were to be removed, it is ‘Ahimsa’. To save a family, an individual could be sacrificed. To save a village, a family could be sacrificed. To save a city, a village could be sacrificed. To save a country, a city could be sacrificed. And for the sake of the world, a country could be sacrificed".

To discipline our faculties mind, and senses such as eyes and tongue, we have to engage in different types of ‘Tapas’ (austerities). The meaning of the word ‘Tapas’ is ‘to melt’. Giving sorrow to us through such 'Tapas' is ‘Himsa’. Yet, it becomes ‘Ahimsa’. If we are without any kind of discipline, we would subject others to ‘Himsa’ on account of reasons such as jealousy, desire (‘Kama’), and anger. The lesser magnitude of ‘Himsa’ that we experience on account of 'Tapas' saves us from inflicting greater ‘Himsa’. Thereby, ‘Tapas’

(austerities) which we undertake intelligently, with the intention of refining ourselves is 'Ahimsa'.

But, some people engage themselves in 'Tapas' which is 'Rajasic', 'Tamasic', very harsh and self-destructive, such as the 'Tapas' which was performed by the 'Asuras' (demonic persons in the 'Puranas'). Such 'Tapas' would not qualify to be called 'Ahimsa'. Those who engage themselves in such wrong austerities, experience 'Himsa' themselves, and give 'Himsa' to others. Indeed, the lives of 'Asuras' are standing examples for this.

In this manner, we should correctly understand the type of 'Himsa' that becomes 'Ahimsa'. In several places in Bhagawad Gita, Bhagawan Sri Krishna stresses the need for 'Ahimsa' and strongly advises it. But the locale where 'Ahimsa' was being explained was the war field! So also, just because some 'Himsa' could result (while trying to reform children, in correcting students, or in punishing criminals), if one were to think that he should practise 'Ahimsa' and therefore does not perform his duty, such a pursuit of 'Ahimsa' becomes 'Himsa'. If, while avoiding a lower magnitude of 'Himsa' that has to be given, a larger magnitude of 'Himsa' were to result, then, to avoid the larger magnitude 'Himsa' taking actions which result in

the lesser degree of 'Himsa' would not tantamount to 'Himsa'.

Now, let us study the benefits that we get, as a result of an intelligent understanding of the true nature of 'Ahimsa' and by its practice.

'AHIMSA PHALAM' (BENEFITS OF 'AHIMSA')

The benefits that accrue due to the practice of 'Ahimsa' are incomparable. To be able to practice 'Ahimsa', the support of certain other values is necessary. Thereby, when we practice 'Ahimsa', we would also acquire these other virtues.

A mind that is filled with good qualities is referred to as a pure mind. Mental purity alone would give us happiness. Further, purity of mind is essential in order to attain 'Moksha' (Liberation). 'Vratam' (austerity) gives good health; but overdoing the austerities would reduce the physical strength. So also, when sorrow affects our mind beyond limits, mind loses its strength. It is only when both the body and the mind have strength, could we attain the goal of our life. Through 'Ahimsa', both physical strength and mental strength are obtained.

The power of discrimination ('Viveka Sakti') manifests only in a mind that is strong and pure. 'Viveka Sakti' is intellectual ability. It is of two types: 1. the ability to discriminate between that which is true and that which is an appearance, and 2. the ability to decide. Discrimination is to know the difference rationally, and decision is termed confirmation of truth. When 'Viveka Sakti' (the power of discrimination) is dulled by the impurities in the mind, the quality of our life would be low. When we practice 'Ahimsa', our 'Viveka Sakti' develops, mind would become refined and acquire strength and would become a vehicle suitable for spiritual journey.

We do not have to wait for a long time to attain the benefits of 'Ahimsa'. They are attained instantly. When a 'Yaga' (Vedic ritual) is performed, we would not know when the result, namely, 'Punyam' would be experienced by us. But when we practice 'Ahimsa', 'Papam' gets removed and 'Punyam' is acquired. Thereby, we instantaneously get purity of mind and a happy state of mind. According to 'Yoga Sastra', 'Ahimsa' yields far greater benefits than other 'Sadhanas'. In addition to getting immediate 'Phalam' (benefits) right here in this world, it is said that one attains higher 'Lokas' (worlds). Through

the practice of ‘Ahimsa’, it is not our (-spiritual seekers’-) intention to acquire ‘Siddhis’ (Yogic powers) or to go to superior ‘Lokas’, after our death. Our aim is to acquire mental purity and ‘Self knowledge’ (‘Tatva Jnanam’) in the current life itself, and to get ‘Mukti’ (Liberation).

Following ‘Ahimsa’, even while we protect others, we are also protecting ourselves. A ‘Jiva’ (living being) is nor born just for the sake of dying; He is born only to live. The next question that arises is, “To live in which manner is he born?”.

A meaningful life is only that where one is happy, and one gives happiness to others. Thus, ‘Ahimsa’ gives a real meaning to one’s life.

ROCK AND FLOWER

The pair of words, 'Rock and Flower', could be interpreted in two ways.

First meaning:

The first meaning is that 'Even those persons, who have hearts as hard as the rock, would refine to have hearts as soft as the flower. When we say, 'Rock and Flower', we mean that even the mind, which is hard like the rock, would be transformed to

become soft like a flower. Though our mind has become hardened like the rock, through 'Tapas' (austerity), through knowledge, and due to the association with the 'Mahatmas' (great men), it would be transformed to become like a flower. Even those who were engaged in 'Himsa' would become personifications of 'Ahimsa'. 'Valmiki' was living like a rock. He, who was engaged in way laying and robbery, got transformed as a 'Muni' (sage) with a refined mind. Though our mind is like the hard rock at present, through appropriate 'Sadhanas' let us make the rock to blossom.

Second meaning:

> 'Our mind should be transformed to be both like the rock and the flower'.
> We should not suffer on account of the world. We should also not give sorrow to the world.

It is only when we do not experience sorrow that we would not give sorrow to others. When the world approaches us, our mind should be hard like the rock. Then alone would we be unaffected by the words of others and the manner in which they treat us. If our mind is hard like the rock, no one could hurt us. Thus, a rock-like mind protects us, like a shield.

When we approach the world, our mind should be soft like the flower; then alone would we not cause sorrow to others. When we listen to others' words our mind should be like the rock, and when we speak, our mind should be like the flower. Thus the meaning of the two words, 'Rock -Flower' is that our mind should function in both the ways.

Attaining such a mental state is the goal of our life. Living with such a mind is called as 'Jivanmukti' (Liberation even while being alive).

CLOSURE

To the extent you love yourself,
To that extent you love others.

This is a general rule. On the basis of our understanding of ourselves, and on the basis of the experiences of our mind, we are interacting with others. Whatever we have experienced, its imprints only would be registered in our mind. It is on the basis of these imprints ('Vasanas'), that our nature (character/ 'Guna') is formed. And, we function on the basis of our 'Guna' (nature). The manner, in which we treat the world, depends on the manner in which we have treated ourselves and the manner in which the world had treated us.

If we were loved, we love.
If we were protected, we protect.
If we were forgiven, we forgive.
If we were accepted, we accept.
If we were subjected to 'Himsa', we give
'Himsa' to others.

Therefore, if we have experienced sorrow either because of us, or on account of others, we would give sorrow to the others. In order that we may not give sorrow to others, we should not have experienced sorrow in any manner. Indeed, 'Ahimsa' is 'our not experiencing sorrow', and 'our not giving sorrow to others'.

Let us bless one another and live; let us enliven others. Let us conclude with this prayer:

"It is good to think well.
It is divine to act well.
To think well, wisdom is needed.
To act well, strength is needed.
O Lord! Give me wisdom and strength."

3

'SATYAM' (TRUTHFUL SPEECH)

INTRODUCTION

‘Truthful speech’ means speaking the truth. There are several subtle aspects that one needs to know about ‘Truthful speech’. Due to the lack of a complete knowledge about ‘Truthful speech’, many people hold the wrong view that “One cannot live in this world, by practicing truthful speech”. The reason why many state erroneously that "Truthful speech cannot be followed" and that “One who follows truthful speech cannot progress in life”, is because they have not understood the true nature of 'Truthful speech'.

Let us attempt to understand the true nature of 'Truthful speech'.

DEFINITION OF 'TRUTHFUL SPEECH'

'Truthful speech’ is to speak what we know.

What we have understood to be the truth, stating in the same manner is 'Truthful speech'.

The three virtues, namely, 'Ritam' (Truth), 'Satyam' (Truthful speech), and 'Dharmam' (Righteousness) are practiced respectively, through the mind, speech, and body.

1. Understanding correctly in mind is 'Truth' ('Ritam' in Sanskrit)
2. Stating through speech, what has been understood to be the truth in the mind, is 'Truthful speech' ('Satyam' in Sanskrit)
3. Performing physical action, in accordance with what has been stated, is 'Right action' ('Dharma' in Sanskrit)

This discipline, practiced through mind - speech - body, is 'Truth' ('Ritam' / Right Understanding), 'Truthful Speech' (Satyam) and 'Right Action' (Dharma).

As speaking the truth is said to be 'Truthful speech', what we have understood in our mind has to be the truth, in the first place. If some one has given us false news, and if we were believe that to be the truth and speak accordingly, even though we might be speaking as per our understanding, our speech would not become 'Truthful speech'. Thus, 'Truthful speech' (Satyam) follows 'Truth' (Ritam).

So also, if we do not act as per what we have stated, our speech becomes falsified. Thus, truthful speech (Satyam) is also dependent on right action (Dharma).

Truthful speech (Satyam) which is the intermediary between 'Truth' (Ritam) and right action (Dharma) is a very important discipline.

The combined practice of 'Truth' (‘Ritam'), 'Truthful speech' (' Satyam '), and 'Right action' ('Dharma’), through thought, word, and deed, is the discipline called 'Arjavam' (straight forwardness). Thus, Truthful speech (‘Satyam’) is the core of ‘Arjavam’ (being straight).

Thus, the definition of ‘Truthful speech’ is to obtain the right knowledge, to correctly state what has been understood, and to act in accordance with what is stated.

There is yet another definition for ‘Truthful speech’ as 'not speaking the untruth'. It is not necessary that we should speak 'all that we know to be the truth'. But, what is more important is that, 'Whatever is spoken should be the truth'. Thus, 'Truthful speech’ is also, ‘not speaking untruth’.

In this manner, 'speaking the truth', and 'not speaking the untruth' are both the two commonly known definitions for 'Truthful speech'. However, in the 'Dharma Sastra', certain other subtler explanations are given for 'Truthful speech'. We will study them further.

'TRUTHFUL SPEECH' (SATYAM) AND 'ULTIMATE GOOD' (SREYAS)

While giving the definition of 'Truthful speech', 'Mahatmas' (Sages) have defined it to be 'speaking that which results in the ultimate good'.

Sage Thiru Valluvar said,

'Vaaymai enappaduvathu yaathenil
yaathonrum theemai ilaatha solal' (Tamil)

'Such speech which is free from any
negativity, is said to be the 'Truthful speech'.

Here, 'Truthful speech' is explained to be speaking that which results in absolute good. This does not imply that 'Truth' is different from the 'Ultimate good' ('Sreyas'). Indeed, 'Truth'

('Satyam') and 'the ultimate good' ('Sreyas') are closely interknit. Even so in a given situation, speaking such 'truth' which results in 'the ultimate good', is 'Truthful speech'. Thus, 'the ultimate good' (Sreyas) takes priority in 'Truthful speech'.

For example, if a person were to know about the disease that he has contracted, and if such awareness would only give him fear, sorrow and result in damage, such truth is not resulting in the ultimate good. In this case, hiding the truth, and informing him differently become necessary. Thus, in the case of 'Truthful speech', the ultimate good (Sreyas) takes precedence over the 'truth' (Satyam)

'SREYAS' (ULTIMATE GOOD)

The antonym to the word 'Sreyas' (Ultimate Good) is harm or evil. 'Ultimate Good' is that which would not result in harm or illness to the body, the mind, and the intellect. 'Arogyam' (health or freedom from disease) is the ultimate good for the body. Virtues are 'Sreyas' (ultimate good) for the mind. Knowledge is the ultimate good for the intellect.

Generally, people think that the sorrow which they experience is bad, and that happiness which they experience is good. But, it is not entirely true that happiness is good and that sorrow is bad.

Certain sorrows might yield us what is ultimately good. And, all happy instances do not result in what is good for us.

Many food items which give pleasure to the tongue do not result in 'Arogyam' (good health), which is the ultimate good of the body. Pleasure which is experienced in the mind due to intoxicating substances (smoking, alcoholic drinks, and psychedelic drugs) is not the ultimate good (Sreyas). Pleasure which is experienced due to lowly habits such as talking disparagingly about others is not good. So also, ignorance, delusion (Moham), etc., do not result in the good of the intellect. In this manner, we should realise that happiness is different and that 'Sreyas' (the ultimate good) is different.

The Katopanishad states, "When 'Sreyas' (the ultimate good) and 'Preyas' (the pleasant) appear before us (as the options), the wise person would not opt for the pleasant and would choose the good".

Just as 'that which is pleasant' is different from 'that which is good', so also 'what is harmful' is different from 'what gives sorrow'.

Not all the sorrows that we experience are harmful to us. Often times in our life, it is the sorrow which refines us. The difficulties that occur in our life are indeed the instruments to teach us certain truths.

By selecting the type of difficulties that result in our good, and by avoiding such pleasures which do not yield us the good, we should seek the ultimate good.

Giving up of the pleasures that do not result in the ultimate good and taking on the sorrow that results in the ultimate good is referred to as 'Tapas' (Austerity).

Thus, if we investigate what all are ultimately good for us, they would comprise good health (freedom from disease) of the body, good values for the mind, and knowledge for the intellect. Whichever factors help in giving the ultimate good, they comprise the ultimate good.

If 'Arogyam' (freedom from disease) is good for the body, food that gives good health, physical exercises, etc., are good for the body. As virtues

are good for the mind, everything that is helpful to acquire such virtues is good for the mind. Since knowledge is good for the intellect, books that are of assistance in acquiring knowledge are good for the intellect.

Our speech could become instrumental in the good of others or it could be detrimental to others. Therefore, 'Truthful speech' (Satyam) is that which results in the ultimate good for us and to the others.

We are now going to study 'Truthful speech' in three steps. In all these three stages, the ultimate good (Sreyas) should be the key factor.

THREE STATES OF TRUTHFUL SPEECH

The discipline of 'Truthful speech' should be practiced in three ways. All these three that we are going to study, are 'Truthful speech' only. Among these three, one should only follow the first state to start with. Only when one is unable to follow this first stage, one should go down to the second state. If one is unable to follow even this second state, then one should go to the third state.

These three states are, respectively,

1. Speaking the truth
2. Hiding the truth, and

3 . Changing the truth and speaking.

All these three are steps in 'Truthful speech'. We will now study these in detail.

First State - 'Speaking the truth'

Our first and foremost effort should be 'to speak the truth'. The general definition of 'Truthful speech' is also 'to speak the truth'. When we speak the truth, we should check if ultimate good (Sreyas) is resulting there from. If ultimate good (Sreyas) would result, then, one should follow only the first state of 'Truthful speech'. When it is possible to follow this state and yet if one goes down to the lower and subsequent steps, such practice becomes 'Untruthful speech'.

Only in a situation when 'speaking the truth' would not result in the ultimate good (Sreyas), should one go to the second lower state.

Second State - 'Hiding the truth'

In a situation when speaking the truth would not result in the ultimate good, it is not wrong to suppress or hide the truth. Indeed, it becomes necessary to hide the truth. It is 'Dharma' (Righteousness) to hide the truth from persons who

do not have the capacity to digest the truth. This is similar to the case of the doctor who hides the true severity of the disease, while counseling to his patient.

It is not necessary for us to speak out all that we know to be the truth. We saw that a meaning of 'Truthful speech' is 'not speaking the untruth'. If ultimate good would result only by not speaking the truth and by hiding it, then such hiding of truth also becomes 'Truthful speech'.

In this context, we should understand the subtle secret in 'Dharma' (Righteousness). Though truth would always result in the ultimate good, if those who were to receive it do not have the mental state to receive it, speaking such truth would only result in harm to them. In such a case, we should be patient and take the due time to give the truth. For example, to a baby who has the ability to digest only milk, one should not feed solid foods.

A young man started to attend Bhagawad Gita classes with interest. He truthfully informed this to his father. But, the father put a restriction for attending the classes. A literal war took place in their home on this account. In this instance, the cause for the problem was the speaking of the truth without hiding it. When truth was told to a father, who did not understand the ultimate benefit that accrues

due to the study of Gita, such truth did not result in the ultimate good.

On many occasions in our life, the reason for our facing difficulties is because we speak the truth that is known to us, to those who are not fit to receive it. Therefore, wherever it is necessary to hide the truth, it should be hidden.

Normally, it is common that one tends to hide only one's negative actions. So, we conclude that whatever is hidden is wrong. But in certain occasions, there is compulsion for hiding the truth and good actions, as well. We notice cases where the husband and the wife could be doing charity or such other good deeds, without the knowledge of one another. Thus, situations do arise at times, where even good actions are required to be done without others' knowledge. Such actions are also 'Dharma' (Righteousness). It is not necessary for one to feel guilty that one is acting surreptitiously in such cases.

The important thing to note is that, the actions that we perform surreptitiously should be those which are permitted by 'Dharma' (Righteousness), and should result in the ultimate good (Sreyas). In this manner, hiding the truth becomes 'Truthful speech'.

Third State - 'Speaking Untruth'

In situations where speaking the truth would not result in 'Sreyas' (the ultimate good), and if hiding the truth is also not possible, then, speaking contrary to truth becomes 'Truthful speech'.

Sage Thiru Valluvar said,

"Poymaiyum vaimai idatta
Puraiteernta nanmai payakkum enil" [Tamil]

'If falsehood were to result in the ultimate good which is without flaws, such falsehood is indeed Truthful speech'

Untruth, which is without flaw and which results in 'ultimate good' is considered to be 'Truthful speech' only.

The normal meaning of untruth is 'that which is contrary to the truth'. Yet here, untruth is said to become 'Truthful speech'!

If all 'Untruth' is said to be 'Truthful speech', then there would be no difference between the two words. The fact remains that 'untruth is untruth'; and 'truth is truth' only. Even so, in

certain situations, 'Untruth' becomes ‘Truthful speech’. Wherever ultimate good results due to untruth, such untruth becomes ‘Truthful speech’. It should be carefully noted that whenever the benefit is exclusively for the person who is speaking such untruth, that untruth remains to be untruth only.

Also, only when one is not able to follow the first two states of 'Truthful speech' as discussed earlier, should one go down to this third and lowest state. When one realises that all these three states are indeed ‘Truthful speech’ only, is it not a mistake for one to think that, "it is not possible to live following the discipline of 'Truthful speech'!

In the example of the doctor which we saw earlier, the doctor had the three options of, i. speaking the truth about the disease to his patient, ii. hiding the truth, and iii. even speaking contrary to the truth. Whichever be the option, it should result in the ultimate good (Sreyas). But, if the doctor were to twist the truth and speak, for the sake of earning money and for his own benefit, it becomes untruth and would give him the result of ‘Papam’ (sin).

Where truth has to be spoken, if truth is hidden, or if what is contrary to truth is spoken, difficulty would result. Where what is contrary to truth has to be spoken, if truth spoken, then also difficulty would result. In order to live following the discipline of

'Truthful speech', one has to be more attentive and careful than while playing a game of Chess.

Practicing 'Truthful speech' is to practice the 'Ultimate good' (Sreyas) in one's speech. Pursuing that which is the 'Ultimate good' (Sreyas) through the three faculties of body, speech, and mind is 'Dharma' (Rightouesness). 'Tapas' (austerity), which does not yield the ultimate good, would not result in our progress.

So far, we saw the definition of 'Truthful speech'. We will now see certain other aspects of 'Truthful speech'.

'SATYAM EVA JAYATE' - (TRUTH ALONE TRIUMPHS)

The Mundaka Upanishad declares,

सत्यं एव जयते

'Satyam eva jayate' (Sanskrit)

Truth alone would triumph.

We should understand this sentence, which literally means 'Truth alone would triumph', to mean that 'he who follows 'Truthful speech' alone would succeed'.

At this stage, we might get a serious doubt. Most people are not ready to accept this 'Upanishad' statement with total trust. Many opine thus: "In current times, if one were to speak the truth, one cannot survive"; "These are not the times for one who speaks the truth", or "He who speaks the truth is gullible". The reason for such a view is that on many occasions they have seen untruth succeeding, and they have also seen the truthful person facing failures and difficulties. Further, they have seen, both in their own experience and in the experience of others, that those who speak untruth complete their tasks easily, and that through untruth immediate gains are obtained. Thereby, they tend to think that the statement, 'truthful speech alone would triumph', is not true.

We are now going to see a very subtle concept.

It is our experience that by giving up truth and by pursuing untruth, immediate gains are achieved and that it is possible to escape from certain difficult situations. Such being the case, how could the statement -'truthful speech alone would triumph"- be true?

Indeed, by pursuing untruth, immediate gains, success and the like are gained. But, such a gain is not a true gain. It is just a false sense of happiness which is experienced at that instant. The loss that

results due to untruth is not noticed then. The pleasure gained is the result of 'Tamoguna' (dullness) which is due to ignorance. The loss that results on account of untruth is incomparable. The gain due to untruth is trivial. Just for the sake of the trivial gain if one were to give up 'Truthful speech', the consequent loss would be great.

It is true that there is an immediate gain due to untruth. It is also true that there is a great loss due to untruth. If we consider the magnitude of the loss due to untruth, the gain cannot be said to be a gain at all.

When one pursues 'Truthful speech', there could be some losses. But, if we evaluate the ultimate good that would result, such loss cannot be said to be a loss at all. The losses that result from 'Truthful speech' are just apparent. The truth is that 'Truthful speech' yields the ultimate good.

We will understand this through an example.

An individual is in the middle income level. He is able to save only very little out of his earnings. In his mind, he has the feelings of lack of security and fear about his future. He thinks that only if money is acquired, he would have security, happiness, and fearlessness. It is not just him, in general, most people opine in this manner.

In a certain shop, a picture with two donkeys was displayed. The picture was garlanded and decorated, and incense sticks were being burnt. There is a belief that if the picture of donkey is displayed, there would be inflow of great wealth. Thus, for the sake of money people are ready to worship even a donkey! In view of the great value given to wealth in the society, many consider money to be an important goal.

To the person whom we have taken in our example, only money seemed to be the top priority. A situation arose, whereby he could get lot of more money if he were to give up 'Truthful speech' ('Satyam). He evaluated the pros and cons, "shall I opt for 'Truthful speech' or money"?

He concluded that with money he could acquire gains such as a house, a car, and new status in the society. He thought that money would give him security and happiness.

His intellect was unable to comprehend the ultimate good which would result from 'Truthful speech'. So, giving up 'Truthful speech' he collected the money. Giving up 'Truthful speech' and pursuing untruth, he became a wealthy person. Around him, he collected lot of objects and people, for the sake of his protection and pleasure. He was decorated with titles such as elite person, great

man, etc. If these external aspects alone are considered, it would not appear to us that 'Truthful speech' had succeeded.

But, let us now see his mind.

The most important reason as to why he ventured to give up 'Truthful speech' was in order to remove the feelings of lack of security, fear, etc., from his mind. But even after acquiring wealth, the sense of fear had not gone from his mind. His current fear is that the money should not go away from him. Another fear is about the income tax officers. Having tasted a comfortable life, his body and mind have become addicted and enslaved to the comforts; he now has the fear that he should not be deprived of these comforts. He also has the fear that the untruths that he had spoken might get exposed, resulting in the loss of his reputation.

The person who thought earlier that money would give him protection, has now understood that he has to protect money.

The fear, to get rid of which he gave up 'Truthful speech', that fear has not left him. Earlier, he was afraid that he did not have money. Now, he is afraid that money should not leave him. Previously, he was able to sleep peacefully. Now he needs sleeping pills to be able to get sleep. Though

he has provided many gates to protect him, a new type of fear has entered his mind.

Indeed, it is only the gateway called 'Truthful speech' that would prevent fear from entering one's mind and protect it.

The accumulation of wealth and objects is the success that came from his giving up 'Truthful speech'. But, the purpose for which he had accumulated the wealth, (namely, gaining security and absence of fear), that has not been achieved. Just considering only the wealth which he had accumulated by being untruthful, we might think that 'Satyam' (Truthful speech) had failed.

But if we observe his mind, we would understand that only 'Truthful speech' would succeed.

In order to understand this truth with even greater clarity, we will see the example of another person.

This second person is practicing 'Truthful speech', and is living on the income that he gets thus. He has not accumulated much wealth. But, his motto is to live a life based on 'Truthful speech'. As a result of the practice of 'Truthful speech', he has acquired a contented mind and a courage that is

immeasurable. His mind has become free of the sense of insecurity, fear, etc. He has the contented feeling, ‘what I have is enough’.

‘Truthful speech’ had not given him external objects and wealth. But at the same time, it has given him a steadfast mind, fearlessness, and contentment.

Between these two persons, who is truly successful?

Undoubtedly, the successful person is the one who practiced ‘Truthful speech’. Thereby the statement, ‘Truthful speech alone would triumph’ (Satyam eva jayate) is the truth.

The practice of ‘Truthful speech’, instills courage in the mind. Petty fears in the mind are removed. Mind experiences contentment. The feeling of jealousy at others, who merely accumulate wealth, would go away. Self validation (the feeling of looking at oneself with a sense of pride) and self acceptance (maturity to accept the manner in which one is) would result. Giving up ‘Truthful speech’ which yields such great benefits for the sake of petty gains, is comparable to the case of selling one's eyes and purchasing a television set.

Occasionally, one might experience some losses due to the pursuit of 'Truthful speech'. But, if one evaluates the ultimate benefits, such losses cannot be termed to be losses at all; they should be considered as investments. In life, one cannot get anything free. It is only through austerity ('Tapas') that one could achieve anything. If we consider the losses and difficulties that result due to 'Truthful speech' as austerity (Tapas), 'Truthful speech always triumphs'. Raja Harischandra practiced 'Truthful speech', and faced several problems initially. But finally, the ultimate good resulted. From one angle, one could say that 'Truthful speech' was unsuccessful at first, but it succeeded ultimately. Upon careful scrutiny, one would recognise that the initial set backs were but the austerity (Tapas), for the great ultimate good that was attained. It means that 'Truthful speech' never fails. Though it could appear that there is initial failure from one angle, in reality, there is never a failure for 'Truthful speech'.

Also the very result, to achieve which one gives up 'Truthful speech', is not attained at all. It is only by practicing 'Truthful speech' that we could attain the desired benefit.

Falsehood makes even the strongest person a coward. Through falsehood, one might accumulate

lot of wealth. But, he would lose the mental state that is required to enjoy that wealth. Untruth cultivates impurities such as jealousy and fear in the mind. Through the virtue of 'Truthful speech' the mind becomes refined. And our mind becomes our friend.

It is the experience of the wise that,

"Dharmo rakshathi rakshitaha"[Sanskrit]
'Dharma' (Righteousness) that is protected (practiced) by you, protects (you).

Therefore, only when we follow the superior 'Dharma' of 'Truthful speech', would we be able to succeed in getting what we desire. And, 'Truthful speech' the true reason for our growth, alone triumphs.

DISCIPLINE IN SPEECH

Man alone has the ability to convey the thoughts that are in his mind to others through his speech and make them understand. Animals do communicate their feelings to their own type to some extent. But, man has got the ability to share his feelings through speech. Such ability could become a curse; or it could be changed to be a boon.

Through 'Truthful speech', we make our ability to speak to be a boon. By falsehood, we convert it to be a curse.

Upon waking up in the morning, the reason why our mind is somewhat calm is because we have not yet commenced speaking with any one. Nor has anyone spoken to us yet. Within a short time from our commencing to speak, two things, namely, our hurting others and our getting hurt happen.

Our speech or word is only an instrument to convey our feelings and our knowledge to others. Instead, the word is often being used as a weapon to attack others. As speech hurts more than even the fire, Sage Tiruvalluvar said that 'the burn caused by the tongue would not heal'.

Instead of using words as instruments to cause 'Himsa' (hurt), if we handle them properly, they would result in the ultimate good of us and others. Such words which give the ultimate good are 'Truthful speech'.

The words that are spoken by us should follow four rules. These are

1.'Satyam' (Truth) ;
2.'Hitam' (the Ultimate Good);
3.'Priyam' (the Pleasant), and

4.'Mitam' (Right measure)

If we keep these four rules in our mind while speaking, that indeed is the ‘Tapas’ (Austerity) which is followed through speech. This is what is referred to as ‘Vak Tapas’ (Discipline in speech).

1. ‘Satyam’ (Truth) : This rule means ‘Speaking the Truth’. We saw this to be ‘Truthful speech’. We also saw that it is wrong to think that ‘Truthful speech’ cannot be followed, and that ‘Truthful speech’ is in three states. Practicing ‘Truthful speech’ in such manner is the first rule or austerity done through one’s speech.

2. ‘Hitam’ (the Good): ‘Hitam’ means the 'Ultimate good', speaking that which results in the ultimate good. This aspect is also ingrained in ‘Truthful speech’. We saw that, for the sake of the ultimate good, truth could be concealed or could even be stated as the contrary. The words that we speak should be so as to result in the ultimate good for us and for the others.

3. ‘Priyam’ (the Pleasant): ‘Priyam’ refers to the expression of a truth that results in the ultimate good, in a soft and gentle manner, which does not wound the other’s mind. It is speaking in a sweet, pleasant, and polite manner whereby the listener’s

mind does not feel pain. Speaking in such a manner is ‘Priyam’.

It was the habit of a businessman to give orders to the construction labourers who work for him, in an angry, loud and harsh manner. An elderly person who noticed this, spoke to that person and pointed out the mistake in his approach thus, “Why could you not give orders in a softer manner! Whether you speak in an angry and harsh manner or in a soft and kind manner, you would still be stating the same matter. So, why can’t you speak to labourers in a calmer manner?”. The businessman realised his mistake, and thenceforth started to speak in a calmer and kind manner and achieved the superior results of such an approach.

One should avoid the use of uncivilised words, and speak in a sweet manner, without causing fear and sorrow in the minds of the listener.

A Swamiji was living in a hut at the foot of a hill. An illiterate person who was residing in a nearby place told the Swamiji, “If any insect enters your hut please raise an alarm, so that I could come and help.” While he used the word ‘insect’, he was indeed referring to the snake. As hearing the word ‘snake’ could cause fear in the listener’s mind, he used the milder word, ‘insect’. Handling one’s words in this manner is said to be 'Priyam’.

4.'Mitam' (Right measure): 'Mitam' means speaking to the extent necessary. 'Talking more than necessary' is the chief reason why one loses one's respect. Every one loves to talk. If so, who would be there to listen! Only very few have acquired the mental attitude to listen. If one were to speak to a person who is not in the mental state of listening, it would result in great sorrow to that person.

The reason, why the elderly people lose their respect with the younger generation, is because of their excessive talk. As age advances, the limbs of the body such as hands, legs, and eyes lose their ability to function. But the tongue does not get tired, however much one might talk. For the mind, which was earlier transacting with the world through several outlets (limbs and organs), in the old age, it is only the mouth that is left as available. Thus in old age, the tendency to speak increases. This excessive talk does not result in the ultimate good of either the speaker or the listener.

In childhood, we took a lot of effort to learn to speak; only when we make an effort which is manifold and engage in practice, could we check the tendency to talk more than necessary.

TECHNIQUES TO PRACTICE 'TRUTHFUL SPEECH’

Only through appropriate practice could any virtue be acquired. We will study some techniques for practicing the superior discipline of ‘Truthful speech’.

1. Realising the superiority of ‘Truthful speech’: As we realise the superiority of ‘Truthful speech’ more and more, our desire to follow it would increase. Later, such desire would transform into its practice.

The maturity of a person is not decided based on his knowledge of what is right and what is wrong. The extent to which one understands the negative consequences of following what is wrong, to that extent he becomes refined.

Every one comes to know what is right and what is wrong quite easily. Whoever does not know that speaking untruth is wrong! Yet, one does not realise the loss which results from untruth. This is so, because the petty gain which has come on account of falsehood overshadows the true knowledge in one’s intellect.

The story of Raja Harischandra is recounted not for the sake of giving the knowledge that one

should speak the truth. It is recounted only to highlight the greatness of 'Truthful speech'. Harischandra faced testing situations, one after another. 'Truthful speech' gave him the strength to bear those difficulties. By the practice of 'Truthful speech', despite losing all his wealth and belongings, he faced the situations with courage and contentment. Ultimately, 'Truthful speech' gave him a very high status.

The reason why we easily give up 'Truthful speech' is on account of our not realising its greatness. A mind that understands the greatness of 'Truthful speech', would not give it up.

A certain person had entrusted a large sum of money in the custody of his friend. He passed away suddenly. Thereafter, when his wife and son requested that friend for the return of the money, the latter lied and denied that he had received any money, and kept that money with himself. He then invested that amount in business and acquired a lot of wealth. Though he had earned a lot of money, the feeling of lack of trust sprouted in his mind. He was unable to trust anyone. He became a mental patient, even fearing that his own wife might poison and kill him.

Our attempt to cheat the world is equivalent to cheating ourselves. Our being honest with others is

indeed protecting ourselves. This is the secret of 'Dharma' (Righteousness).

Realising the greatness of 'Truthful speech' in this manner is the first technique to practice it.

'Sastra' exhorts the greatness of 'Truthful speech' through stories. And 'Sastra' commands us to follow 'Truthful speech'.

सत्यं वद
'Satyam vada' [Sanskrit]
'Speak the truth'

'Sastra' commands us to speak the truth. It would never tell something that is impossible to follow. And 'Sastra' would also not advise us the obvious, something that we would naturally do. For example, 'Sastra' would not advise us, 'breathe'.

'Sastra' would only exhort that, which is for our ultimate good (Sreyas), and the pursuit of which needs some deliberate effort and discipline on our part.

Indeed, 'speaking the truth' is somewhat difficult. At the same time, it is not an impossible task.

Let us realise the great glory of 'Truthful speech' which is exhorted by 'Sastra'! May we rise thereby!

2. 'DharmaAnushtanam' (Practice of Righteousness): When one deviates from the path of 'Dharma' (righteousness) and practices 'Adharma' (non-righteousness), speaking untruth becomes unavoidable, in order to hide the mistakes that have been committed.

The reason, why the practice of 'Truthful speech' is felt to be difficult, is because one has to avoid 'Adharma' (non-righteousness) totally. How could a person, who is committing wrong actions such as stealing, use of intoxicants, not doing one's duty, and accumulation of illegal wealth, practice 'Truthful speech'! For one who is living a life based on 'Dharma' (righteousness), the pursuit of 'Truthful speech' is very easy. Therefore, to be able to practice 'Truthful speech', we should give up other negative actions.

3. Mental courage: On many occasions, we speak untruth due to lack of courage. At times, we might slip from our duty, or there might be some weaknesses in us. To be able to speak the truth without hiding our flaws, we require mental strength.

Between the two mistakes, namely, committing a mistake, and speaking an untruth later to cover up the mistake, hiding the mistake is a bigger mistake.

A Swamiji gave a letter to his disciple to be posted. After a week when he met the disciple, the Swamiji enquired if the latter had posted the letter. The disciple replied that he had posted the letter. But, the fact was that due to his forgetfulness, the disciple still had the letter with him.

In this case, the first mistake was not posting the letter. But, the greater mistake was the non-acceptance of his mistake.

As long as we continue to hide our flaws, they would continue to be with us. Accepting our mistake, if we develop the mental strength to speak the truth, our flaws would progressively disappear.

We should not accept a praise, which we do not deserve. If some one blames us for a mistake that we have not committed, we hasten to refute that blame. But, if some one attributes a glory which is not in us, we not only keep quiet but also relish such praise. Such behaviour is very low and mean. This weakness becomes a reason for one to deviate from 'Truthful speech'. Not advertising the glory which is in us is a superior 'Tapas' (austerity). Talking about a greatness that is not in us is a low quality. If we study our speech, we would notice

that there is lot of self-praise. To give up self-praise and to own-up our weakness, mental strength is necessary.

It is alright if there are some flaws in us at present. We could remove them through proper effort. But, actions such as covering up of our flaws, justifying them, and claiming greatness that is not present, are all wrong. One must remove these weaknesses forthwith.

4. Taking 'Truthful speech' as a 'Vratam' (vow): Some people observe the vow of fasting on certain specific days. The very intention (Sankalpam) to fast gives the strength to them to bear hunger on that day. But on the other days when vow of fasting is not taken, there is no discipline in respect of food.

When a 'Sadhana' (practice) is being taken as a vow, it is easy to follow that practice. Till such time when the virtue becomes our nature, we should take that virtue as a 'Vratam' (vow). A person, who has full control over his food, need not take a vow in respect of food. But, till that time when such discipline is acquired, taking a vow is necessary.

One should practice 'Truthful speech' as a 'Vratam' (austerity). At present, falsehood happens to be with us as our nature. In the same manner, till such time when 'Truthful speech'

becomes our very nature, we should take 'Truthful speech' as a 'Vratam' (vow).

Method of taking 'truthful speech' as an austerity

We should not disclose to any one that we are taking the vow of 'Truthful speech'. It should be kept as a secret. To begin with, select any one day of the week for observing the vow. Suppose we have selected Wednesday. Take a vow, "Today from 6 am till 10 am, I will practice Truthful speech". During that period, the thought that, 'this period is the Time for Truth' would be present in our mind. There would be certain awareness in our mind. The main reason for taking a vow is only to create this awareness. Beyond 10 am we could behave in the normal manner. After few weeks of practice in this manner, the period could be extended, say, from 6 am to 12 am.

Progressing in this manner, we could extend the observation of the vow of 'Truthful speech' for a full day; later, for two days in a week, and so on. Ultimately, we should transform our entire life as one of 'Truthful speech'.

Creating awareness is an art. We decide that we should not discuss a certain matter in a certain place. On the contrary, we end up speaking that

very matter at that very place. We wish that we should not overeat, but, we end up eating excessively. In this manner, why do we do a thing that we don't wish to do?

Lack of awareness is the reason for this.

It is to create this awareness, that we observe different types of 'Vratams' (vows).

Upanishad gives us the warning, "Don't be inattentive!"

There is no better way than 'Vratam' (vow) to bring our attention to the virtue that we have to acquire.

Keep the vow of 'Truthful speech' a secret. Or else, people would gather around you at that time!

Taking 'Truthful speech' as an austerity might appear to be simple and funny also. Try to practice it for a while; you would reap the benefits beyond expectations.

5. Silence ('Maunam'): If we are able practice 'Maunam' (silence), we could be free from many false statements.

We saw that, ‘not speaking untruth’ is also ’Truthful speech’. If we were to practice ‘Maunam’ (silence), we would acquire many other superior virtues, besides ’Truthful speech’.

There are instruments to evaluate the quality of an item. So also, 'the words that we speak' are the instruments which indicate the extent of our advancement in spirituality. Our speech is the instrument that measures the refinement attained by us.

‘What we speak’, ‘How we speak’, and ‘How much we speak’ decide our state of maturity.

We analyse others’ talk, but do we analyse our own talk to that extent!

If we introspect, we would notice that we speak about others’ flaws and about our greatness. And we would notice that we speak in a depreciating and critical manner about the weaknesses which are in others, while justifying weaknesses which are in us.

It is through our speech that we are inflicting sorrow to us and to others, and are accumulating lot of 'Papam' (demerit).

In the initial stages, one would not have the balanced state of mind, to understand the situation correctly and to speak about the right matter, in the right manner, and to the extent it is warranted. 'Vratam' (vow) of silence helps us greatly to acquire a balanced state in our speech.

God has given us the power to speak. It is wrong to avoid using it and it is also wrong to misuse it!

In case of food, for example, the extremes of overeating and not eating (fasting) are both easy. But, taking food in the right measure is extremely difficult. Same is the case with our speech, as well.

By taking the 'Vratam' (vow) of 'Maunam' (silence), one could avoid falsehood; one could avoid self-praise; one could avoid demeaning talk of others; and one could avoid disturbance of the mind. Many such benefits accrue to us through the 'Vratam' of 'Maunam' (silence).

We should give up arrogance. At the same time, we should maintain our self respect. 'Speaking more than required' results in loss of self respect. As the extent of speech reduces, the ability to think would increase. The mind-set to listen to what others speak develops. If we wish to acquire knowledge, our speech should reduce.

Anjaneya had the title of 'Master of Speech'. He kept his speech under his control. Thereby, he excelled in all the aspects of 'Bhakti' (devotion), 'Seva' (service), 'Balam' (strength), and 'Jnanam' (knowledge).

Practicing 'Maunam', let us acquire the virtue of 'Truthful Speech'.

CLOSURE

While 'Speaking the Truth' is 'Truthful Speech', we saw that, 'Not speaking Untruth', and 'Speaking in a manner which results in the Ultimate Good ('Sreyas')', are also 'Truthful Speech'. We saw that 'Truthful Speech' (Satyam) cannot be separated from 'the Ultimate Good' (Sreyas).

Such 'Truthful Speech' is practiced in three states as,

1. Expressing the truth,
2. Hiding the Truth, and
3. Modifying the truth and speaking.

In these three steps, if the 'Ultimate Good' does not result from the first state, one has to go down to

the second state. And if the 'Ultimate Good' does not result even in the second state, then alone should one go down to the third state. The third state is falsehood which results in the 'Ultimate Good' (Sreyas).

If we understand the nature of ‘Truthful speech’ to be such, we would clearly realise that ‘Truthful speech’ is not a virtue which cannot be practiced.

Though there could be some immediate gain due to falsehood, we saw that our desired goal would be attained only due to ‘Truthful speech’, that is ‘Truthful speech’ alone would succeed. After seeing as to how our speech should be, we saw a few techniques for practicing ‘Truthful speech’.

Every one has to investigate the reasons why one is speaking untruth, remove those reasons, and should make an effort for pursuing 'Truthful Speech'.

Through our efforts and by the great Grace of Iswara, may we get the strength to practice 'Truthful Speech'!

Through 'Truthful Speech' may our lives blossom!

Blessings.

4

WHO COULD GET LIBERATION (MOKSHA)?

INTRODUCTION

A bird which is bound lives in a cage;
a liberated bird lives in the nest.

We commence our study under the heading 'Who could get Liberation (Moksha)?'. We will take a 'Mantra' from 'Brihadaranyaka Upanishad' as the theme and continue our 'Vichara' (enquiry).

Before commencing our 'Vichara' (enquiry), let us pray to 'Bhagawan Siva' to guide our thoughts and help to remove the knots which are in our 'Chittam' (mind).

Hidden in the query, 'Who could get Liberation (Moksha)?', are few more queries as follows.

- Where is one bound?
- What is the nature of the bondage which has bound the person?

- What is the way for liberation?
- What is the state of a person who is liberated?

From the 'Upanishad Mantra' that we have selected, we can find the answers to these queries.

What is the general and simple answer that we can give for the question – 'Who could get Liberation?'.

We could say, "Liberation is for a person, whosoever is bound". But, that would not be the completely right answer, for though that person is bound, if he has not realised that he is bound, where is the question of liberation for him? Those, who are not even aware that they are bound, would not also realise 'What liberation is'. Thus, even among the people who are bound, liberation is only for such a person who is aware that he is bound.

The bird that is born and has grown in a cage (in bondage) would not know the happiness of flying free in the open sky. For such birds their own wings would only be a burden. The bird has to know the difference between the cage and the nest. Even when the body is affected by a disease, till the symptoms of the disease manifest, none attempts to

get rid of the disease. Only when there is awareness of the disease, the thought of removing it would arise. Thus, the first step in the answer to the query 'Who could get Liberation?' is this: 'Liberation is for such person who has become aware that he is bound'.

Some people could have disease in their body. They would even be aware of the presence of the disease. Yet, they would keep postponing the treatment. Not realizing the consequences due to such postponement, they would be disinterested in the treatment for the disease. Such persons would not get liberation from the disease. So also, though a person might be aware that he is bound, if he has no desire to get liberated, there would be no liberation for him. Getting to know that one is bound is 'Jnanam' (knowledge). The desire to get liberated from such bondage is 'Ichcha' (desire). In whom so ever the desire to get liberated becomes very strong, he alone gets to the second step towards liberation.

Only when the desire becomes very strong, would one engage in the action. Engaging in the effort which is appropriate for getting liberated is, 'Kriya' (action). None can succeed without 'Sadhana' (practice). The final step in the answer to our question, 'Who could get Liberation?' is this -

'Who so ever, (i) having understood that he is bound, (ii) develops a burning desire to get liberated; and (iii) engages in 'Sadhana' (action) to get liberated, would get liberated'.

At first one must have the 'Jnanam' (knowledge) about what our prison is, what the nature of the bondage is, and how to cut those bonds. As we understand more and more about the despicable state of the bondage and the glory of the freedom, one would get a yearning to be liberated. Such yearning or burning desire (Teevra Ichcha) would propel us to engage in action. 'Teevra Ichcha' (strong desire) is the reason for getting us to act. None performs an action which he does not desire. Even if one acts without desire and interest, such acts would not be of the best grade. Even if both 'Jnanam' (knowledge) and 'Ichcha' (keen desire) are there, without 'Kriya' (action), 'Siddhi' (success) would not result. In this context by 'action' we mean 'right effort'.

To the query 'Who could get Liberation?', the final and complete answer is, 'Liberation is only for such a person, who so ever has realised that he is bound; develops the burning desire to get liberated form such bondage; and engages in the right effort'.

These three steps, 'knowing', 'developing keen desire' and 'taking right effort' in that order are referred to as 'Jnana Sakti', 'Ichcha Sakti', and 'Kriya Sakti'.

When India was enslaved under colonial rule, leaders such as Subramania Bharathy gave the knowledge to the masses that they were in an enslaved (bound) condition. In order to remove the delusion that people had, they kindled the desire for freedom in them. Along with the people, engaging in the right effort, they ultimately achieved the country's freedom.

Thus, among the three factors, namely 'Jnanam', 'Iccha', and 'Kriya'; what one seeks at first is 'Jnanam' which is followed by 'Ichcha' and by 'Kriya'. To succeed in anything in life, all these three conditions should be fulfilled.

VEDA IN HUMAN LIFE

We saw that knowledge is the foundation for all actions. Our desire is based on our knowledge. Our actions are based on our desire.

Veda is the 'instrument' that gives us the 'knowledge' about matters such as,

What is ultimate goal to be attained in human life?
What are the appropriate 'Sadhanas' (practices) for attaining that goal?
Who has created this word?, and
What is the relationship between us and the Creator?

'Veda' is the source of knowledge (knowledge giving instrument) in such matters. Veda is called 'Marai' in Tamil, meaning 'Secret'. If something is known to us, and if it is hidden from others without being shown, we call it a 'secret'. Without sharing it with others and without being of use to others, if due to selfishness one tries to keep something secret, it is a result of the low quality called 'Lobham' (miserliness). If one keeps wealth, art, education, etc., secretly and without sharing, they would perish with us. When we refer to 'Veda' as 'Marai' (Secret), we do not mean that 'Veda' should be kept secret, away from others. The right import is that

1. 'Vedas' give us truths which cannot be known through our senses.
2. The knowledge given by Veda is most rare.
3. Such knowledge is very superior.

Thus, 'Veda' is the treasure house of the supreme knowledge which is rare and which is not perceivable by the senses. We would now see the two secrets that are given by 'Veda'. Knowing those secrets, if one attains the benefit that is to be reached, then

"You would be free and liberated like that sparrow"

TWO SECRETS REVEALED BY 'VEDA'

"Oh Bhagawan! When the pair, one which yields pleasure (Preyas) and another which results in the ultimate good (Sreyas), appear before me as the choices, bless me with the wisdom to give up the pleasure and pursue the ultimate good."

The first secret which is revealed by 'Veda' is about 'Dharma' (Righteousness) and the second is about 'Brahman'.

At first, we will see the secret revealed by 'Veda' about 'Dharma', and then we will see the secret that is revealed by 'Veda' in respect of 'Brahman'.

Men experience happiness in their lives. They also seek happiness as their goal. If we were to enquire as to the reason for one to get happiness, each one would give a different answer. Further, each would also give a different answer at different points of time. When their sense organs (such as the eyes, ears, etc) are associated with a particular object, if they were to experience happiness, they would state that the particular object is the reason for their happiness. In general, people state wealth, relations, friends, belongings, position, etc., as being the sources for one's happiness. A child would say that the balloon is the cause of its happiness.

In this context, the secret which is revealed by 'Veda' is that, for a person to experience happiness, the factor that brings the necessary, pleasure yielding object within the reach of the person is 'Punyam' (merit), a factor which is not perceivable by the eye. 'Punyam' is indeed the reason for our experiencing happiness. So also, 'Papam' (demerit/ sin) is the cause for one to experience sorrow. This is the secret that is revealed by 'Veda'.

One might say that he is not aware that 'Punyam' and 'Papam' are the real reasons for the experience of happiness and sorrow. It is for this very reason that this truth is not easily perceived that we refer to it as a 'Vedic' secret.

It is our 'Punyam' which brings the association and contact between us and the objects that give us happiness. Even if such pleasure giving objects are with us, if we do not have 'Punyam', they cannot give us happiness. If a sweet meat shop owner has Diabetes, he cannot experience the happiness from those sweets. None welcomes sorrow. Yet, the reason that sorrow comes to one is due to 'Papam'. That the unperceivable 'Punyam - Papam' are the causes for our happiness and sorrow is the secret revealed by 'Veda'. Upon knowing this, what strikes in our mind? It is the thought,

"How is one to acquire 'Punyam'?
How is one to avoid 'Papam' ?"

'Veda' also reveals the ways for this. Further, 'Veda' reveals other unknown secrets such as to how to use 'Punyam' to get 'Moksham' (Liberation).

TECHNIQUE FOR 'PUNYAM'

If we practice 'Dharma' (Righteousness) we acquire Punyam (Merit). By practicing Adharma (non-righteousness), Papam (demerit/sin) results. Not giving sorrow to others, all the good deeds that

we undertake, and the good values (Sadgunas) that we practice constitute 'Dharma'. Causing sorrow to others and evil (negative) qualities constitute 'Adharma'. Getting the knowledge as to what is right and what is wrong, practicing righteousness, one could accumulate 'Punyam'. Further, in 'Veda', several 'Karmas' (rituals / actions) and many types of 'Dhyanams' (meditations) are described for acquiring 'Punyam'. Our first goal is to seek 'Punyam' and to avoid 'Papam', by these means.

'SREYAS' –'PREYAS' (ULTIMATE GOOD VERSUS PLEASURE)

The 'Punyam' which we have acquired is like the wealth that we have accumulated. We could use our wealth for different purposes. So also, we could use the 'Punyam' for either happiness, or for our ultimate good. Happiness is called 'Preyas' (pleasure) and the ultimate good is called 'Sreyas'. Happiness (pleasure) is different from the ultimate good. At every step in our life, two options are available to us, namely, that which gives pleasure (Preyas), and that which results in the ultimate good (Sreyas). Foolish people opt for pleasure and get drowned in sorrow, ultimately.

If we take the example of food, we could categorise it under two sets, one which gives pleasure to our tongue, and another which is beneficial to our body. It has become our nature to avoid the nourishing food stuff and to select the items that are tasty to our tongue. The consequence is temporary happiness, and ultimately disease. So also, we could use our other sense organs such as the eyes, ears, etc., for either for pleasure or the ultimate good. In the same manner, we could also expend 'Punyam' which has resulted from our good deeds and 'Tapas' (austerity) for either the ultimate good or for the sake of pleasures.

It is recounted in 'Puranas' that 'Asuras' (demons) did 'Tapas' (austerity) and prayed for pleasures as the result. Instead, if we were to use the 'Punyam' which we acquired for our ultimate good, the progress that we get is far superior. 'Upanishad' praises the person who gives up 'Preyas' (pleasure) and chooses 'Sreyas' (the ultimate good) as 'Dheeraha' (strong willed person). Opting for the ultimate good, just like one opts for good health through proper food, is opting for what is healthy (purifying) for the mind. Diseases such as greed, jealousy, anger, pride, and fear are residing in the mind. Removing these diseases, purifying the mind, removing delusion and ignorance from the intellect,

and getting liberated thereby, is the real freedom. Utilising the results that accrue from our good deeds for purifying the mind is called spiritual progress. In this progress, the ultimate benefit that one attains is 'Moksham' or liberation.

Therefore, when one selects 'Sreyas' (the ultimate good) in preference to 'Preyas' (the pleasure), one has become ready for liberation. The second secret revealed by 'Veda' would become clear only to such a person.

BRAHMAN

"He, who knows himself, does not face any harm"

We saw that the second secret which 'Veda' reveals is about the 'Ultimate Reality', that is, about 'Brahman'. The portion of the 'Veda' which gives us the knowledge about 'Brahman' is called 'Upanishad'. As 'Upanishad' generally occurs in the last portions of 'Veda', it is called 'Vedanta'. 'Vedanta' means the last portion of 'Veda'. Therein the study of the 'Ultimate Reality' and the 'Unreal entity' is done. The first portion of 'Veda' is about 'Karma' (Actions/Rituals). The final portion is about the nature of 'Absolute Reality'.

In this book, we take a 'Mantra' from 'Brihadaranyaka Upanishad' and investigate it in detail. We will first see the 'Mantra' and see its literal meaning:

"Atmaanam chet vijaaneeyaat
ayam asmeeti puurushaha |
kim icchan kasya kaamaaya
sareeram anusamjvareth || [Br.U.4-4-12]

"If a person, upon realising that he is (in essence) this 'Paramatma', desiring what, and for the sake of whose benefit, would he feel sorrow on account of the body?"

If we investigate the inner meaning of this 'Mantra', we would get the answers to all our queries. First, let us see the word meaning of this 'Mantra':

'puurushaha' = A person

[This word refers to a 'Sadhaka' (spiritual aspirant) who has opted for 'Sreyas' (the ultimate good)]

'vijaaneeyaat chet' = if he were to realise (/ upon realising)

'Atmaanam' = himself

'ithi' = thus

'asmi' = I am (in essence)

'ayam' = This (Paramatma)

[the word 'chet' indicates that such knowledge to realise oneself to be 'Paramatma' (in essence) is very rare and not easy]

'kim icchan' = desiring what

[It is expressed thus to indicate that, if one gets this knowledge, he would become free from desire].

'kasya kaamaaya' = for whose benefit

[He does not feel sorrow, in order to satisfy others; nor is he without contentment].

'sareeram' = on account of the body

'anusamjvaret' = would he feel sorrow!

[It means that for the sake of his body, he would not experience sorrow].

The first line of this 'Mantra' gives the 'Jnanam' (knowledge) as to how one should know oneself. The second sentence gives the 'Phalam' (benefit) of such 'Jnanam'.

When one knows that he is not the body, if he realises himself to be the different from this body which is susceptible to destruction, and as the 'Ultimate Reality' (Brahman) which is of the nature of consciousness, then all the desires that afflict the mind get removed. Before getting 'Jnanam', objects engulf one in delusion (Moham). Upon attaining 'Jnanam', the objects lose their ability to engulf one in 'Moham'. The self same objects that were subjecting one to delusion earlier, now lose their ability to submerge one in delusion. The afflictions that come to the body, are not for him. 'Moksham' which is the benefit of 'Jnanam', is explained in this manner.

Further, we will take each word of this 'Mantra' and study in detail. There are 5 important aspects in this 'Mantra'.

1. The condition of the 'Jiva'
2. 'Sadhanas' (Spiritual Practices) which are to be undertaken by a 'Jiva'
3. Nature (Swaroopa) of 'Jiva'

4. Nature of 'Paramatma' (Brahman)
5. Characteristics of 'Moksha' (Liberation)

LACK OF AWARENESS OF WHO I AM

"Worldly experience is sorrowful; yet, there is no courage to renounce"

In the 'Upanishad Mantra', the word 'cheth' indicates 'rarity'. Though every one knows about oneself, to correctly know about one self is rarest of rare.

An anecdote: A young man went to a doctor. The doctor enquired as to what the youth was doing. "I have renounced the household and am going to study 'Vedanta' in Rishikesh", said the youth. The doctor exclaimed in surprise, "Are you insane?".

The youth retorted, "You could be insane! If you are sane and clear, can you give me the right answers to my questions"? The doctor agreed.

"Who are you?", asked the young man.
"I am a doctor", replied the doctor.
The young man said, "Doctor is the name of your profession. I am not asking about your profession. I am asking about you"

The doctor thought for a while and said, “I am a man”.

“Man is the term for a biological group, among different living beings such as goat, cattle, elephant, etc. I am not asking about your biological group. I am asking about you”, said the young man.

“I am son of Kandasamy”, said the doctor.

“I am asking about you. I am not asking as to whose relation you are”, continued the young man.

The doctor became pensive. He started to realise that it was not easy to get the right answer to the question, “Who am I?”.

Thus, most of us do not have the awareness that we do not correctly know 'who we are'. Let us see at what stage this understanding about “I” is, at present.

CHAINS OF BONDAGE

"How are we bound, at present?"

It is important to know the nature of the chains that bind us.

People keep on seeking objects, relationships, situations, money, and so on. They seek these as they cannot get happiness without these. It is true that we get happiness when we get the items that we seek. But, the objects from which we derived

happiness at a certain point of time, give us sorrow at another time. The relations on account of whom we feel happy, they themselves give us sorrow by their words and behaviour. As sorrow is being given to us by objects and relations, even if we wish to give them up, we are unable to do so. We are unable to stop seeking them, and we are unable to be with the objects that we have acquired. Such life in this world, where one is neither able to accept nor give up, is called 'Samsaram' by 'Sastram'. Like a whirlpool, which does not push a person who is caught in it to the shore nor sinks him but keeps him swirling all the while, human life is revolving in a hapless manner.

A person, who was confused as to whether he should get married or not, wrote a letter to his 'Guru' thus. "Guruji! I am confused in respect of the choice, 'Relationship or Renunciation'. I have no courage to renounce. And I am scared of entering into relationship. I am afraid of losing the freedom which I have as a single person. I am also afraid to be alone. To be in company could result in difference of opinion and friction, while being single is emptiness".

Such a state is bondage or 'Samsaram'.

One is unable to give up the happiness that is given by the objects, people and situations. Yet,

one is unable to bear the sorrow given by them. A tiny snake caught hold of a big frog. It has no inclination to leave the prey, and it is unable to swallow it. Such a struggle is 'Bandham'(bondage).

Arjuna came to the war. He experienced confusion. He became weak to fight even. He had no mind to leave the war field. In similar manner, people in this world are staying put in a bound condition. They are unable to be happy in the world. And, they are not able to give up the world.

What is the reason for us to be in such a state?

FUNDAMENTAL CAUSE OF BONDAGE

To meet a person, we get to know his address and reach the place of his residence. In the same manner, let us investigate where 'bondage' is located. That is, our next study is about the cause for such bondage.

For anything, there must be a cause. Nothing manifests or disappears without reason. And, the cause would be in multiple steps. For example, if we enquire about the cause for our dress, it is the cloth. This is the right answer. But, the cause for the cloth is the thread, proceeding thus, the cause for the thread is cotton, the cause for cotton is the earth,

and we could thus proceed up to the fundamental or root cause.

Thus, we may understand something to be the cause, superficially. But, upon further investigation the cause would be going deeper. Let us now understand the secret about the fundamental cause for the chains of our bondage. For all our troubles and travails, the superficial causes are objects, situations, the manner in which other people treat us, what others talk about us, etc. When we do not analyse carefully, all these are indeed the reasons. But, if we investigate even a little, we would understand that the external objects, situations or people are not the reasons for our sorrow.

If a person who is close to us were to die, our sorrow would be the maximum on the first day. We would notice that our sorrow reduces after a few days. The external situation that the person had died has not changed from the first day to even after a considerable span of time. But there is a change in the extent of sorrow. When one is a child, it is very sorry if its balloon were to burst. But, for a grown up person it is not so. From this, we get the knowledge that the cause for our sorrow is not outside us, the cause is our mind which interprets this external situation. If we explore further, we would understand that our mind is not giving us sorrow at all times. At times, the mind is also the instrument for

our happiness. Sorrow results only, when emotions such as Desire ('Kama'), Anger ('Krodha'), Jealousy ('Asuya'), Delusion ('Moha'), and Miserliness ('Lobha') appear in the mind. Therefore, the reason for our sorrow is not just our mind, but also the negative qualities that are in the mind. If we investigate the cause for these negative values which give us sorrow, these negative values manifest from the lack of fulfillment in our mind. When our mind is full, where is the scope for desire, anger, jealousy, etc!

Why does the lack of fulfillment manifest in the mind? Why is there a sense of emptiness in the mind? We can find out the reason for this sense of lack only with the help of 'Vedanta Sastra'. The reason for this sense of lack is the ignorance in the mind about the 'Absolute Reality'.

Considering entities such the body and the mind, which are not real to be real, and considering their natures as its own, mind acquired this sense of incompleteness. Hence, the real reason for our bondage is ignorance (lack of knowledge) about the nature of that principle, which is called by different names such as Brahman, Atma, True Entity, Absolute Reality, etc. 'Atma Ajnanam' (Ignorance about 'I') is the root cause for one's bondage. In our experience, ignorance would not

appear to be the cause for sorrow. Only by thinking and investigating could this truth be realised.

In the 'Mantra', we saw that the term 'Purushaha' refers to that individual who, having understood the nature of bondage, understanding the cause for it to be ignorance, has become an aspirant (Sadhaka) to remove that cause and commences the 'Sadhana' (spiritual disciplines).

Hitherto, we saw the nature of bondage and the fundamental cause for it. Now let us see the 'Upayam' (technique) to remove the bondage.

'SADHANAS'

> "O Bhagawan! If I were to engage in the
> service of others, the state of Moksha
> (happiness) would ultimately result".

Let us see the 'Sadhanas' (spiritual practices) which are to be undertaken to remove the bondage. If 'Ajnanam' (ignorance about the Self) is the cause for bondage, the only way to remove such ignorance is to acquire 'Jnanam' (Self-knowledge).

This is what is referred to in the 'Mantra' as 'vijaaneeyaat' – "is realised". At first, let us understand the nature of the ignorance. Like darkness, ignorance ('Ajnanam') has the nature of covering up (hiding) something. Darkness hides an object which exists. Similarly, ignorance also covers what exists. Darkness would not destroy the object. So also, ignorance would not destroy anything. 'Jnanam' (Self-knowledge) is comparable to light. Light shows the presence of an object. In the same manner, knowledge also shows an existing entity. Light does not create the object. So also, knowledge does not create anything. The only enemy to darkness is light. The only enemy of 'Ajnanam' (ignorance of the Self) is 'Jnanam' (Self-knowledge). Therefore, we should get 'Jnanam' (knowledge), 'Jnanam' about that entity, ignorance about which has caused our bondage.

There is an entity, but we are not aware of it. This has resulted in sorrow. In such a state, getting the knowledge becomes our principal task (Sadhana). Our next question would be, 'How do we get knowledge'?

'Vicharam' (Study)

Study (Vichara) is the discipline (Sadhana) for getting knowledge. We get knowledge only when

we use an instrument that gives knowledge. Such an instrument which gives us knowledge about an entity is called 'Pramanam'. The five organs, namely, body (skin), mouth (tongue), eye, nose, and ear are the five instruments that give knowledge. Knowledge about the soft nature of a flower is indicated by the skin. So also, taste is given by the tongue, colour by the eyes, smell by the nose, and sound by the ears. Upon using these instruments, knowledge occurs.

On a certain morning, we see smoke in a distant place. Though we do not see any fire directly, on the basis of guess, we get the knowledge about the presence of a fire. So also, someone explains to us about something that we do not know. From that explanation, we get knowledge. Obtaining knowledge from another's words is called 'Sabda Pramanam' (knowledge giving instrument based on sound). To get knowledge about 'Paramatma' (the Ultimate), the final portion of Veda, namely, 'Upanishad', is the 'Pramanam'. Listening to the 'Upanishad' from the 'Guru' (traditional teacher) in a proper manner is called 'Vicharam' (Study) here.

Not having complete knowledge about a certain entity is one stage. In that stage, simple investigation could be adequate. Instead of

understanding the entity properly, if one had understood it erroneously, then serious investigation becomes imperative.

We see a rope, and we take it to be a snake. In this case, not only have we not understood that it is a rope, we have also wrongly understood it to be a snake. Therefore, 'Vicharam' (study) becomes necessary.

In the case of the knowledge about us, we have not understood "Who I am really". Moreover, we have erroneously understood our nature. Therefore, it becomes essential to do 'Vicharam' (study) to understand our real nature.

The knowledge that reveals our own true nature and the knowledge that make us understand 'Paramatma' are both one and the same. Therefore, with the assistance of the 'Guru', listening to the concepts explained in the 'Upanishads', and enquiring, is termed 'Vicharam' (study). Such 'Vicharam' is the instrument for attaining 'Jnanam' (Self-knowledge).

Our next question is – "What is the criterion for the 'Vicharam' to fructify?"

'Sraddha' (Faith)

To engage in the 'Sadhana' (spiritual practice) of 'Vicharam' (study), it is necessary to have trust or faith in 'Guru' (teacher) and the 'Upanishad Sastram' which is being taught by 'Guru'. This trust or faith in the instrument that gives us knowledge is called 'Sraddha'.

At this stage, 'Sraddha' (faith) is most essential. The reason is as follows. The individual is considering himself as being born, as being sorrowful, and as going to die. But, the 'Guru' tells him, "You are free from death", "You are of the nature of 'Ananda' (Bliss), and "You are indeed Paramatma". The disciple (Sishya) sees that Guru's teaching is contradictory to his own experience. In such a situation, only if one has faith, could one continue 'Vicharam' (study).

The disciple has to set aside his own flawed experience, and has to realise the 'Upadesam (teaching) given by the 'Guru'. Till such a time when he realises the teaching, 'Sraddha' (faith) is essential.

Our next question is, what should one do to cultivate faith in the 'Guru' and in the 'Sastra'?

'Seva' (Service)

The service that we do gives us the faith. Here, 'Seva' refers to the service that we do to the 'Guru' and to other human beings. The social work that we undertake yields great benefits to us. The service that we do develops faith in our mind. It gives the 'Sishya' (disciple) the opportunity to go closer to the 'Guru'. When the disciple goes close to the 'Guru', he gets the opportunity to understand the 'Guru'. When he observes the benefit of the 'Jnanam' in the 'Guru', 'Sraddha' (faith) in the 'Sastram' grows. With the enthusiasm, "I too should attain such benefit", he would do 'Vicharam' properly. Therefore, the 'Seva' that we do assists by way of giving us 'Sraddha' and in developing the same.

When could we engage in 'Seva'?

Strength (Balam)

Only, when we have physical strength (Deha balam) and mental strength (Mano balam), could we engage in 'Seva'(service). If we do not have bodily strength, we would need others' help, and we cannot help anyone! Mental strength (Mano balam) denotes good qualities such as the ability to

withstand difficulties, and patience. We should cultivate the physical strength through intake of healthy food and through physical exercises. Mental strength (Mano balam) should be developed through a disciplined life based on 'Dharma' (righteousness).

Thus, a 'Sadhaka' (spiritual aspirant) has to engage in step-wise 'Sadhana' (spiritual practice), before he could attain 'Moksha' (Liberation). Commencing with a 'Dharma' based life and disciplines such as dietary discipline, acquiring strength, engaging in 'Seva' (service) with such strength, gaining 'Sraddha' (faith), and subsequently, when he engages in 'Vicharam' with faith, then 'Jnanam' results. The benefit of 'Jnanam' (Self knowledge) is the release from all sorrows.

'WHAT I AM NOT'

"You are not the five basic elements;
note carefully, nor are You the Indriyas
(organs of knowledge) or the instruments!
Investigate! 'You are the Consciousness'.
These were the affectionate words of the
Master, they resulted in Bliss, my friend!"

We saw that attaining 'Jnanam' (Self-knowledge) is 'Moksham' (Liberation). We also saw the steps prior to acquiring 'Jnanam'. Let us now see the nature of the 'Jnanam' that one should get. The subject of 'Jnanam' is “I” (oneself). The 'Mantram' mentions the word 'Atmaanam' - 'if the person were to know himself as Paramatma'. Now, let us investigate “Who am I?” (do 'Atma Vicharam').

We saw that 'Vicharam' is needed, where there is confusion. This leads to the question, “What confusion is there in the word, "I", which necessitates 'Vicharam' (study)?” If we ask a person “Who are you?”, is he not able to reply us with clarity. He would not answer alternately, “I am Kumar", the first time, and "I am Raman", after a while. Such being the case, why should one engage in the 'Vicharam' of the topic 'Who am I?'?

At first, let us see if there is any confusion in the word “I”.

CONFUSION IN THE WORD 'I'

Whichever object we are able to pin point as “mine”, we would not refer to it as 'I'. For example,

when we say “This is my house", or "this is my car", etc., we would not take the meaning of 'I' to be either the house or the car. What is meant by the word 'I', cannot also become the object possessed by me. If we use this rule and think, we would realize that we are indeed confused in respect of the meaning of the word 'I'.

The object that we are referring to as 'I' in a particular instance, we are referring to it as 'mine', at another time. But, 'What is mine' can not become 'I'. For example, we go to consult a physician. When we tell him, “I was sitting in the waiting hall for half an hour to see you”, the implied meaning for the word 'I' is our physical body. It is only the body that can sit, or stand, or walk. Thus, in the statement "I was sitting", the equation is, 'I' = Body. We have come to consult the physician because the state of the body is not alright. If the word 'I' meant the 'Body', then we should tell him that "the state of 'I' is not alright". But instead we tell him, “the state of my body is not alright”. Here, the body has become “mine”. 'The body' that was 'I' earlier has become “mine”. If so, is the body 'I' or 'mine'? We are referring to the body as 'I' at times, and 'mine' at other times. From this, it is clear that we are not having clarity as to the true meaning of the word 'I'. So also, when we say “I am seeing”, the word 'I' has

become the 'eye'. But, when we say, “My eye is not seeing clearly”, the eye has become 'mine'.

We are taking the body, the different organs, and the mind as 'I' and 'mine', alternately, and we are also referring to them as 'I' and 'mine', alternately. In this manner, as there is such a confusion, it is necessary to do the investigation (Vicharam) about "Who I am?”.

WHO AM I?

We will now engage in the investigation (Vicharam), “Who am I?”.

In the word, 'I', two entities are mixed. Just as we call the mixture which has many different vegetables, as 'Salad', we have understood the mixture of two entities as the meaning of the word, 'I'. We call one of these entities as 'Atma' and the other as 'Anatma'.

What is the nature of 'Atma'? 'Atma' is of the nature of consciousness (Chaitanyam), that is sentiency.

'Anatma' is our body, it is insentient in nature. Let us first see the characteristics of 'Anatma'.

'Anatma' means that which is not 'Atma'. This 'Anatma' is both as our body and as the world that we experience.

Thus, 'Anatma' = Body + World.

'ANATMA'

We will investigate the nature of the 'Anatma' that is as our 'body', at first. Later we will study the 'Anatma' that is as the 'World'. Our body is also called by another name, 'Sareeram'. Our 'Sareeram' (body) is of three types.

1. 'Sthula sareeram' (Gross body);
2. 'Sukshma sareeram' (Subtle body);
3. 'Karana Sareeram' (Causal body)

'Sthula Sareeram' (Gross body)

This body that we see and experience is 'Sthula sareeram'. We will see the four characteristics of the 'Sthula sareeram'.

1.'Sthula sareeram' (the gross body) is the combination of the five gross elements (Sthula pancha bhutams), namely, Space (Akasam), Air (Vayu), Fire (Agni), Water (Apaha), and Earth

(Prithivi). The bones, muscles, etc., in our body denote the earth principle; blood denotes the water principle; the warmth in our body denotes the fire principle; 'Prana' (breath) denotes the air principle; and the empty spaces in stomach and other locations denote the Space (Akasa) principle. Since this body is the combination of the five 'bhutas' (elements), when the gross body dies, it disintegrates and resolves into the corresponding elements. This world is also a combination of the five elements, just like the gross body.

2. This gross body (Sthula Sareeram) is called 'Bhoga ayathanam' (Field of experience). 'Bhoga' means the experience of happiness and unhappiness. 'Ayathanam' means field or residence. Our gross body is the field for the experience of happiness and sorrow. Happiness and sorrow are experienced by our mind. Our gross body serves as the location where the mind experiences happiness and unhappiness.

3. Though the gross bodies of all are but the combination of the five elements, gross body of each individual is unique and different. We see variations such as human body, animal body, healthy body, body with disease right from the birth, and physically handicapped body. The reason for these variations is the 'Karma phalam', the result of

actions done by that 'Jiva' (living being). Just as we acquire a house, vehicle, etc., as the result of our own actions and effort, so also the gross body (Sthula Sareeram) has been acquired by us as the result of the actions done by us. For the differences seen in the gross bodies, the reason is the individual's 'Karma phalam' (results of action). If a person purchases a car and another a bicycle, it is based on the money that they have earned. In the same manner the gross body that we have got is what we have earned. It is the result of our actions.

A person went to the doctor and told him, "I have stomach ache". He then enquired, "How could this stomach ache be my 'Karma phalam' (result of my action)?" The doctor asked, "What did you eat today morning"? He replied, "I ate ten Pooris with Potato masala curry". The doctor answered, "This stomach ache is indeed the result (phalam) of the 'Karma' (action) done by you today morning". Thus, our gross body and its state are what we have acquired.

'Sastram' talks about 'Karma phalam' in order that we take full responsibility for our present condition, but not to make us become diffident thinking that "it is our fate".

4.The gross body (Sthulal Sareeram) is susceptible to six types of changes. These are referred to as 'Shad Vikaram'.

i. 'asti'	: Being in the womb
ii. 'jaaayate'	: Birth
iii.'vardhate'	: Growth
iv.'viparinamate'	: Transformation
v. 'apaksheeyate'	: Deterioration
vi.'vinasyati'	: Death

All the gross bodies inevitably experience this six-fold change. This is the very nature of the gross body. We are referring to such a 'Sthula Sareeram' (gross body) as 'I' at times and as 'mine' at other times.

'Sukshma Sareeram' (Subtle Body)

Our mind, which cannot be seen by the eye, is the 'Sukshma Sareeram' (Subtle body). Let us see its four characteristics.

1. Just as our gross body is the combination of the five elements (Pancha bhutams), our 'Sushma Sareeram' (subtle body) is also a combination of the five elements. The five elements (Earth, Water, Air, Fire, Space) that we see are gross, they

became gross from a previous, subtler state. The subtle body is formed by a combination of the five elements while they were in their subtle state.

2. The subtle body (mind) resides in the gross body and functions as the instrument for experiencing happiness and unhappiness. It is called 'Bhoga Sadhanam' (instrument for experience).

3. Each person has a unique mind. Just as we acquired our gross body as a result of action (Karma phalam), so also the subtle body (Sukshma sareeram) is also the result of our actions. That is our mind is what we have earned.

4. The subtle body comprises nineteen constituents. The sum total of the following nineteen entities is called the subtle body.

i. The five knowledge giving instruments (sensory organs - 'Jnana Indriyas'), namely, body (skin/touch), mouth (taste), eye (vision), nose(smell); and ear (sound);

ii. The five instruments of action (organs of actions - 'Karma Indriyas'), namely, speech (the ability to speak), hands, legs, anus (the excretory

organ), and the genital (the organ helping to urinate);

iii. The five 'Pranas', namely, 'Prana' (the ability to breathe out air); 'Apana' (the ability take air in); 'Vyana' (the vitality that assists the circulation of blood), 'Samana' (the digestive power), and 'Udana' (the power that enables the subtle body to exit from the gross body, at the time of death); and

iv. The four faculties of the mind, namely, 'Manam' (Emotional faculty), 'Buddhi' (intellect); 'Chittam' (memory), and 'Ahamkaram' (sense of doership).

'Manam' (also called mind) is the assembly of thoughts such as love, kindness, suspicion, and hatred;

'Buddhi' (intellect) is the assembly of thoughts involved in decision making;

'Chittam' (memory) is the impression or record of our experiences;

'Ahamkaram' is the thought that considers the 'Anatma' (the body, mind, intellect) to be 'I'.

Indeed, all these four are only thoughts. Yet, in terms of the manner of their function they have been considered as being distinct.

The subtle body (Sukshma sareeram), which is thus a combination of the above nineteen entities is being referred to by us as ‘I’ at times, and as ‘mine’ at other times.

'Karana Sareeram' (Causal body)

'Karana Sareeram' (causal body) is that which was the cause for the manifestation of the gross body (Sthula Sareeram) and the subtle body (Sukshma sareeram). With out a cause, nothing would manifest. Such 'Karana Sareeram' cannot be experienced like an object. Just as the seed is the cause for the tree, we have this causal body. In 'Karana Sareeram' (causal body), all the results of our actions (Karma phalam) are latent, just as in the seed. We resolve to the causal body in our deep sleep. Thereby, the causal body is filled with ignorance and happiness.

Thus, the 'Anatma' of a 'Jiva' (living being) is divided as three bodies.

NATURE OF 'ATMA'

Let us study the nature of 'Atma', now. 'Atma' is 'That which is indestructible'; 'Which is of the nature of consciousness'. This 'Atma' has totally different nature than 'Anatma'. Let us compare the two.

'Atma Swaroopam' (Nature of Atma)	**'Anatma Swaroopam'** (Nature of Anatma)
1.'Druk' = Seer (knower)	1.'Drisyam' = seen (that which is known)
2. 'Chit' = Sentient	2.'Jadam' = Insentient
3. 'Nirvikaram' = unchangeable	3.'Savikaram' = susceptible to change
4. 'Ekam' = one	4. 'Anekam' = many
5. 'Satyam' = Truth (Real)	5. 'Mithya' = just an Appearance

'Atma' and 'Anatma', which have such totally divergent natures have got mixed up. The true meaning for the word 'I', is 'Atma'. Thereby, knowing oneself means, 'giving up the sense of

identification' with the body, which is 'Anatma', and understanding oneself to be just the 'Atma'. In this manner, knowing oneself to be the 'Atma', and also knowing that such 'Atma' is indeed the 'Ultimate Reality', one should identify oneself with 'Para Brahman'.

IDENTITY

"Kalaiyai kalainthu pin paarthen - Iyan
kalai anri veru onrum kandilan" [Tamil]

"I removed the apparent and saw behind.
The Lord is none other than all this"

Knowing oneself to be the 'Atma', one ought to realise that such 'I', who is non-different from the 'Atma', am (is) the 'Parabrahman'. This is what is explained in the 'Mantra' thus;

'atmaanam vijaaneeyaath cheth' : If one were to know

'ithi' : thus

'ayam asmi' : I am (as) this Parabrahman

Let us now see the nature or essence of the principle that is being called as 'Paramatma', 'the Ultimate Principle', 'Absolute Reality', 'Parabrahman', etc.

THE ULTIMATE PRINCIPLE

We experience this universe. We also observe that this universe is functioning in an orderly manner. Such a universe could not have suddenly manifested without a 'Karanam' (cause). There must be someone who has created this world. 'Upanishads' introduce that principle as 'God' to us. That principle, which is being called as 'God', 'Iswara', 'Lord', 'Saguna Brahman' etc., is the cause for this universe.

'Karanam' (cause) is of two types:

1. 'Upadana Karanam' (Material cause),
2. 'Nimitta Karanam' (Intelligent cause)

For the product called pot, clay is the material cause (Upadana Karanam). The potter is the intelligent cause (Nimitta Karanam). 'Upanishad' explains the type of cause 'Iswara' is for the product referred to as the universe, in the following manner.

Just as the spider is both the material cause and the intelligent cause for the spider web, in the same manner, 'Iswara' is both the material cause and the intelligent cause for this creation.

Thus, the answer to the question, "Who is God?" is -"He, whoever is the cause (both the Intelligent cause and the Material cause) for the Cosmos, is God"

Such God is as the combination of two principles, i. 'Parabrahman' & ii. 'Maya'.

Thus, 'God' = 'Parabrahman' + 'Maya'

In association with 'Maya sakthi' (power of Maya), 'Brahman' has become the cause for this Cosmos.

Let us see the natures of 'Brahman' and 'Maya'.

'Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam – Brahma'

That, which is Existence, which is of the nature of Consciousness, which is Infinite, is Brahman'.

'Maya' is that principle which is insentient, which is dependent on 'Brahman' like a shadow.

'Brahman' viewed in association with 'Maya' ('Gunas' /attributes) is 'Iswara' (also called 'Saguna Brahman'). Viewed without 'Maya', it is the attribute-less, 'Nirguna Brahman'.

In the study, 'Who am I', in the word 'I', both 'Atma' and 'Anatma' were mixed up. We saw that one should negate the 'Anatma' part and understand 'I' to be 'Atma'.

The knowledge which results in 'Moksham' (liberation) is to understand that 'Atma' (which is 'segregated' from 'Anatma') and 'Brahman' (which is 'segregated' from 'Maya') are one and the same. The 'Anatma' which we saw is but the manifestation of 'Maya'. 'Anatma' is the body and the world. 'Maya' is the causal (seed) form of 'Anatma'. Both 'Maya' and this world have the same nature. And 'Brahman' and the 'Atma' have the same nature.

'Atma' and 'Brahman' are not two entities. The same true entity is called 'Atma' when seen as base or substrate for the body; it is called 'Brahman' when seen as the base or substrate for the world.

Thus, the second sentence of the 'Mantra' explains that the liberation is attained by knowing one's true nature as identical with that of 'Paramatma'.

'JNANA PHALAM' (BENEFIT OF 'MOKSHA')

"Ennaiyum thannaiyum vera - Ullattu
ennatha vannam irandum ara nirka
sonnathu mo oru solle - Antha sollaal
vilaintha sukhattai en solven" [Tamil]

'How could I describe the Happiness which resulted from that one Word, which did not separate me from That and told me to look beyond the two bodies (Upadhis/ vestures)'

The first line of the 'Mantra' tells about understanding oneself as 'Paramatma'. The second line explains the benefit of such knowledge. A person who has such knowledge attains 'Moksha'. 'Moksha' means liberation. But, such liberation (freedom) is from what?

It is freedom (liberation) from the desires which are binding us and which are resident in our own mind. Emotions that scorch our mind us such as Anger, Hatred, Jealousy, Fear, and Arrogance,

are all the different manifestations of desire. Desire is the sense of incompleteness of the mind. When our mind is full or contented, there are no burning emotions in us. Thereby, the result of 'Jnanam' (self-knowledge) is the end of sorrow. As our sorrow manifests in different ways, the 'Upanishads' explain 'Moksha' (freedom from sorrow) in different ways.

'kim icchan' = desiring what

These words explain the point that the 'Jnani' (Seer) does not desire anything. Desire (want) has gone away from the Jnani's mind. The reason for the non-manifestation of desire is due to the disappearance of the sense of incompleteness from his mind. As he has realised, “I have no connection with the physical body and the mind. I am seeing these as a witness”, he has no desire in his mind. As there is no want, there is no dependence on any entity (people, object or situation).

If the desire-free state of the mind is the benefit of 'Jnanam' (Self knowledge), how could such a person, who has no desire in his mind live? If even the desire to eat food has left him, how could he live? We have to distinguish between the two types of desires that arise in our mind.

1. desires which arise on account of the lack of fulfillment in the mind
2. desires which arise from a sense of fulfillment in the mind

The first type of desires manifests from the sense of incompleteness in the mind. If such desires are not fulfilled, they transform as sorrow; as anger, fear, or hatred towards those who are seen as being obstacles to those desires. This set of desires is what is called the 'binding desires', 'knot in the mind', etc.

The second type of desire is the consequence of contentment or fullness. If such desires are not fulfilled, sorrow of any type would not occur in the mind. It is a desire without a condition that it must be fulfilled.

When a messenger brings happy news to the King, the King rewards him with his necklace. The King's action has resulted out of a desire to reward the messenger, yet it does not cause sorrow to him. So also, the desires that arise in the mind of a 'Jnani' are comparable to a defanged snake, like a rope that is burnt to ashes, and like a seed that has been roasted.

For the 'Upanishad' statement, ' desiring what', the first meaning is that 'Jnani is without desires'. There is a second meaning also, “What is there for

him to desire?", "there is nothing which is desire-worthy to Jnani". If we had visited a toy shop in our childhood, all the items therein would attract us. Those objects were worthy of our desire. But when we grew up, those toys are not worthy of our desire any more. Our development has changed the desirable objects to objects which are merely seen. For a grown up person there is no desirable object in a toyshop. So also, for a 'Jnani', this entire world is like a toy shop. For him, there is no object that is to be desired. No object in this entire world has the power to attract his mind. There are no objects that kindle desire in the 'Jnani'. The reason for this is the 'Jnanam' (Self-knowledge) of the 'Jnani (Seer). He, who has realised that all the objects of the world are impermanent and are mere appearances, what would he desire! What would he seek and chase! One who has understood that the water that he sees is a mirage, would not run towards it to quench his thirst. So also, upon knowing that no object (or people or situation) would give him fulfillment, what would a 'Jnani' hanker after!

The words, 'kim icchan' indicate that 'Jnani' is free from desire, and that there is no object which is desirable for him.

Where is the person who desires?

In the section of the 'Mantra' which reads, 'kasya kaamaya', the point is being stated that the person who desires is not there! The person, who experiences happiness and unhappiness in this world, is called 'Bhokta' (Enjoyer). 'Karta' (Performer/ Actor) is the individual who performs action. Being 'Karta' (performer of action) and 'Bhokta' (enjoyer of the result) is the worldly life ('Samsaram'). But 'Jnani' is of the nature of a 'Witness'('Sakshi').

The body, mind, etc., perform actions (Karma). They only experience (enjoy) the results (Karma Phalam). 'Jnani' is the one who stays put with the awareness -"I am not attached to anything (Aham Asangaha)". Such a 'Jnani' is different from the erstwhile 'Karta - Bhokta' (Actor - Enjoyer). The 'I' who was there earlier, is different from the 'I' who is there now.

The young, 'Gautama Buddha' left his wife on a certain night, under the cover of darkness. After 12 years, he happened to meet his wife again. His wife asked angrily, "Why did you go away without telling me? Did it not cause a great shame to me, a princess". 'Buddha' responded finally, "You should have posed this question to the person who ran away. The person who ran away, has gone once

and for all. The person who has come now is different."

Yes, the 'Samsari' (worldly person) who ran away was different. And 'Buddha' who realised the truth was different. In our life also when we live with the changes, due to the new knowledge, the transformation which has resulted in the mind on account of this knowledge, and the manner in which we value the world, we too are new persons. The jealous person, the sorrowing person, and the fearful person, has gone away. In his place, the contented person, the blissful person, and the person with love and kindness, has appeared. This is the concept which is expressed here. The meaning of the words, "To satisfy whom is he going to sorrow?", is that the 'Enjoyer' (Bhokta) has gone away; in his place the blissful person has come.

The last portion of the 'Mantra' reads, 'anusamjwareth', meaning, 'he will feel sorrow, following the body'.

For him who has realised that, "Sorrow is for the body, not for me", neither the external situation nor the body's condition would have any affect. One could ask, "If a disease affects the gross body (Sthula Sareeram), how could one be without sorrow?" When in deep sleep, one does not feel

sorry about the disease in the body. When there is no feeling of attachment (abhimanam) with the body, there is no sorrow at that time. In the waking state too, if attachment is given up, the pain alone might be felt. But, there would be no sorrow in the mind. Those who struggled for the freedom of our country went to the jail. They suffered physically (bodily). But in their mind, they were very happy with the sense of sacrifice for the sake of the country. So also, when 'Jnani' gives up the attachment (abhimanam) to his body, he does not grieve about the condition of his body.

This world brings different types of situations before us. The result of the 'Jnanam' (Self-knowledge) that we have acquired is to be just a witness (Sakshi) and see them as one would see scenery. We are bound by our mind. Once 'Jnanam' occurs in the same mind, it becomes a garland that beautifies our life. Destroying the mind that causes sorrow is called 'Mano-naasam' (annihilation of the mind). Upon 'Jnanam', the mind is not destroyed entirely, but it only gets transformed. [Even if we call transformation as annihilation it is not a mistake]. It is said, "Money is a good servant, but a bad master". (This also applies to all the objects). We are not going to be liberated (or freed) from the objects that we utilise, or from our body, or from people. Nor is there a

necessity to be free in such manner. Liberation (freedom) is only from the attachment to these. Our mind is now attached to these objects (people and situations). Instead, from henceforth what if they are there, but we are not attached to them! Thus, liberation is from attachment of the mind to all objects.

This 'Mantra' gave us the knowledge as to how we should know ourselves. It also told us how such knowledge liberates us.

This 'Mantra' is the key to open the lock on the 'cage' that is holding us.

"The open sky beckons you. Fly out freely"

Blessings

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Om Tat Sat
